SEEKERS FOR LIGHT

W. T. P. Wolston

Light of the world! shine on our souls;
Thy grace to us afford;
And while we meet to learn Thy truth,
Be Thou our Teacher, Lord!

May we its riches, power, and depth,
Its holiness discern;
Its joyful news of saving grace
By blest experience learn.

Thus may Thy Word be dearer still,
And studied more each day;
And as it richly dwells within,
Thyself in it display.

E.B.

GEORGE L. FAULKNER
CALVARY BAPTIST C
MACON, MISSISSIPPI

SEEKERS FOR LIGHT.

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THE RALPH E. WELCH FOUNDATION
181 Monterey Road
Orange, California

Seekers for Light.

FOURTEEN ADDRESSES TO EDINBURGH STUDENTS.

BY

W. T. P. WOLSTON, M.D.,

Author of "Another Comforter;" "Behold the Bridegroom;" "Night Scenes of Scripture;" "Simon Peter: His Life and Letters;" "Young Men of Scripture," &c. &c.

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PREFACE.

GOD takes great interest in young men. Life is before them, and He would have that life devoted to Him. It was an angel who first heard the command, "Run, speak to this young man" (Zech. ii. 4), but, since then, He has often stirred His servants to specially seek them. It was an impulse of that sort which led to the delivery of the addresses in this little volume, and the Lord graciously blessed the spoken word to many a youthful heart.

The knowledge of this has led to their publication. That God may deign, by these simple unvarnished words, to win many more hearts for His dear Son, is the fervent desire, and prayer of the Author.

46 CHARLOTTE SQUARE,
EDINBURGH, *16th December* 1897.

FOREWORD

The reader may wish to know something of the author of this book, W. T. P. Wolston, M.D. He was saved as a young man and was much devoted to the spread of the gospel of the grace of God. He valued it greatly, as that which had met him in his own deep need, and was always glad for an opportunity to tell it to others. He lived in Edinburgh, Scotland; and there, in spite of a large medical practice which made great demands on him, he was never too busy to stop and relate the gospel to a needy soul. He also found many opportunities to preach the gospel before large audiences, and it is said that for many years he preached the gospel somewhere every day.

From one preface in his books, dated December 16, 1892, we learn that he was saved exactly thirty years prior to that date, or on December 16, 1862. From another preface, dated August 1, 1913, we learn that he was still going on in the Lord's service, twenty-one years later.

Many books and tracts came forth signed W. T. P. W., and we believe they were much used in presenting the gospel simply and clearly so that many anxious souls found peace through reading them. They were also used to awaken careless souls to their need of Christ, while many young Christians who had opportunities to preach the gospel found much helpful material in them. His clear elucidation of the incidents of Scripture are still rejoicing the souls of many Christians.

Many of his books are corrected notes of his gospel addresses, and this one is no exception. We have no way of knowing how many editions of these books have been printed, but as we send this edition forth in 1962, we do so with a desire that the Lord may use it with blessing to many souls—both saved and unsaved.

1962 Paul Wilson

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SEEKERS FOR LIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

A Fisherman's Discovery; or, Finding and Following.

(John i. 35-42; Luke v. 1-11.)

I PROPOSE, dear friends, with the Lord's help, in this course of meetings to speak a little to you on Light, and to show in the history of the various men that will pass before us, the different ways in which the soul gets into light; because no two persons, I believe, get it by the same road. That is what makes Scripture so interesting. It shows us all kinds and sorts of people, describing them exactly as they are. It shows us different classes, and different conditions of soul, all passing through different exercises, and eventually, it shows us how grace leads each soul into the light.

It is impossible to over-estimate the value of light. It is a wonderful thing light. Scripture says, "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light" (Eph. v. 13). The light shows exactly what the true state of affairs is; and, therefore, until a man is in the light he does

not know what he is; and he does not know God. In fact, until a soul is brought into the light it really does not understand its true state before God.

Now, in the Scripture before us you see this brought out. We have elsewhere the wonderful statement, that, "Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John iii. 19). Light comes first of all, in the Person of Christ, for, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not" (John i. 4, 5). Now, that is a very remarkable statement. You see if you bring in what we call natural light, or physical light into darkness, out goes the darkness. If this room were in darkness at this moment, and some one turned on an electric light, the darkness would vanish at once. If you were in a coal-pit, and your light went out, you would be in darkness, and you could not estimate the relation of things. What would be the natural way of letting you see where you were, and what your surroundings were? Bring in the light; for, when the light comes in, away goes the darkness. That is the truth regarding natural things; but in divine things the solemn thing is this, that although light comes, the darkness remains; for the darkness does not comprehend the light.

But I hear you say, What is the Light? God—"God is Light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John i. 5). And what is the darkness? Man. Oh, no! you say; you mean he was in the darkness. No, I do not. Man makes the darkness; the darkness is what his own state as a sinner is. That constitutes the darkness, as we read, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord" (Eph. v.

8). It is a wonderful moment when a man gets into the light, and becomes "light in the Lord." I do not know how many of you have got into the light; but, if you never have got into the light hitherto, remember, you may get into the light to-night, and I will say this to you at the outset, you will never get into the light, until you get to Christ.

Remember, then, the light has come. In the Old Testament, I read, "God said, Let there be light, and there was light" (Gen. i. 3). And I also read that "God divided the light from the darkness" (Gen. i. 4). It is a wonderful moment in man's history when God says, "Let there be light." I do not mean to say that every man is groping after light, or that every sinner is creeping towards the light. I wish it were so. When God works in the soul, it is always light that the soul craves for. If there is an anxious man here this evening, he wants light. He is looking for light, and would like to get light. He longs for it then. I am in the dark, he cries; I would like to see. He is just like a young man I saw the other Sunday night, when I came home from a big meeting. When I reached my house, there was a young man waiting for me. He was a most exemplary fellow, so far as walk and conversation went. His greeting was, "May I have a word with you?" "Certainly," I said; and he came into my private room. A minute afterwards he burst into tears. "Oh, pray to the Lord for me," he said. "What is the matter?" I asked. "Oh! I am just a wicked boy; I am such a wicked lad; pray to the Lord to have mercy on me." Thank God! the Lord did have mercy on him. The Lord saved him, but he said he was afraid he would never be able to confess

Christ, yet he made a splendid confession. To the first person he met on Monday morning, he confessed the fact that Christ had saved him; and in the workshop, to a man who was thoroughly godless, the first thing he said was, "I have received Christ." You see, my friends, when the light gets into a man's heart, it is a wonderful thing. Let the light into your hearts!

Well, the light has come, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. "God is light"—bear that in mind—and "in him is no darkness at all." But, since God is light, the light reveals the true relation of things. Light first of all shows where man is, and for that purpose Light came into the world. "That was the true Light, which coming into the world lightens every man" (John i. 9). You must not understand by that statement that every man was converted. Oh, no! The Light was there, and was for everybody, but alas, nobody had eyes to see it, until God had wrought in the heart and opened the eyes; that is the solemn side of the truth. Sin has plunged us in such a condition of distance from God, that really we do not see who Christ is, or what He is, until God opens our eyes. When Paul appears before Agrippa he says, that the Lord had commissioned him to go to "the Gentiles, unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in me" (Acts xxvi. 17, 18).

Now would you like to have light? Would you like to have peace? Light will discover to you your lost condition; for it exposes you. Yes, but I will tell you what takes place after the light makes

manifest to you that you are a poor, wretched, hell-deserving sinner. The next thing that light will do, is to reveal that "God is love," and that He has given His blessed Son for your salvation. Light will reveal your guilt, and love will blot it all out. Light will make manifest your lost condition, and love will meet it. God is light, and God is love. Both are seen in Jesus.

In the Gospel of John of which I have read a few verses, you see that before the Lord Jesus came out in His public ministry, God sent out a man called John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, to bear witness of Him. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe" (John i. 6, 7). Do you not think it is a wonderful thing that God should send a person to bear witness about light. I think if you will reflect, my friends, you will see what an awful state man was in, when it required that somebody should, so to speak, come and say, "I bare witness to the Light." If a man came into this town, and went down Princes Street, pointing, as he did so, to the sun, and crying, "Look up there!" "What is it, man?" the people would say. "Look," he says, "there is the sun, and light coming from the sun," and he keeps on saying that. Why, you would think the fellow was fit for a lunatic asylum. Yes, I hear everybody say, that man has gone off his head. Think of it! There was the Light in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, "and the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." So God sent a man to bear witness to the Light. "John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This is he of whom I spake, He that

cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me" (John i. 15). Further, the One who is the Light is the Son of God, and He is the Lamb of God. He is the One, who alone can meet the needs of man.

That is what came out in John's ministry, as he pointed to Jesus. A remarkable man was John; he was a little bit of the ascetic, a man sojourning in the wilderness, and living simply on locusts and wild honey. He was a downright, sterling, intensely devoted man. From one end of the land to the other he goes; he has but one message, one word to deliver, and he rings it out all over Israel. What is it? Repent! "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. iii. 2). I tell you what it is, men, God bids you repent. Ah! sinner! if you have never repented yet, it is high time you did. Why did John say, "Repent"? Because he saw the end of things coming, when "the axe is laid unto the root of the trees" (ver. 10). If you lay an axe at the root of the tree, what is the next thing? Down comes the tree. The tree may have been good to look at outside, but when it comes down, what is often found then—that it is rotten inside.

That is a picture of man, who is very nice outside, but, at heart, he is at enmity to God; he is rotten inside. I tell you what man is like. I have sometimes gone into a shop, and purchased a beautiful pear. I have taken it away, thinking that it was beautiful, and when I got home I began to pare the skin off, and there was a little bit of a spot in it. Paring it still further, the spot got bigger still. I cut another piece off, it was more rotten still. Ah! you say, it is rotten to the core. Yes, and you, sinner, are the pear; you are the man. You are rotten to the very core; there

is not a good thing in you. I know that man says, I will try and do good, but the Holy Ghost says, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom. iii. 12). You will have to learn that there is no good thing in you, and that nothing good can come out of you.

It is a grand thing when a man gets down on his knees in real repentance. Some of those who heard John, "were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." Others, self-righteous people, rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him. At length, when John was upon the banks of Jordan, one day, he sees Jesus coming towards him, his heart swells, his tongue is loosed, and out comes the blessed truth, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29).

In pressing upon sinners to get down and own their sins, John had never told them how they could get rid of those sins. But when he sees Jesus coming, he proclaims these beautiful words, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The first man brought sin into the world, and this man, God's Lamb, was to take away sin. Have you ever had to do with Him? Have you ever come into contact with Him? This was His character; He was the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. And then the Baptist reiterates his witness, "This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me; for he was before me" (John i. 30). He was an eternal Being; He was the Son of God. "And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a

dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God" (John i. 31-34). He saw Jesus, and, as we read elsewhere, baptized Him, and then saw the Holy Ghost coming down like a dove, and abiding upon Him.

You remember in the days of Noah, when the flood was upon the earth, Noah sent out a dove in order to see what was the state of matters, and in a short time the dove came back, for she found no resting-place. He sent her out seven days after, and again she came back, but this time with an olive leaf in her mouth. When she was sent forth the third time, she did not return, she had whereon to rest. When the Holy Ghost fell upon the blessed Lord Jesus Christ in the form of a dove, what had happened? For over four thousand years the Holy Ghost had been searching in vain over this earth to find a holy, sinless, spotless man on whom to come and abide. At length here was the One upon whom He could rest. He, so to speak, like the dove, had not found any place whereon to rest. And why did not Noah's dove rest? Were there not plenty of bodies upon which it might alight? Yes, the water was, so to speak, alive with carrion; corpses floated upon the water everywhere, but these afforded no resting-place. And the Holy Ghost had brooded over the world all these years, and had seen but moral carrion—man, a wretched, ruined, godless, sinful creature in himself. True He had come upon men like Balaam or Saul, but He left them. He had come upon men like David and Isaiah,

but He left them. But here was a holy, spotless man, and He came and abode upon Him. Because Jesus was perfect, sinless, and holy, the Holy Ghost came and *dwelt* in Him. He was in His moral perfection the delight of the Father, the Lamb of God, the Son of God; and, more than that, He who received the Holy Ghost would baptize with the Holy Ghost. That is, He takes your sins away and gives you the Holy Ghost. What a wonderful thing! The One who can take away the sins of men can also give them the Holy Ghost; can give them the needed power for the enjoyment of His life dwelling in their souls.

John gives this testimony to Jesus, and what takes place? Nobody followed Jesus that day, but on the next day John lost two of his disciples. Then, as he contemplated the Lord, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (John i. 36.) He does not add, "which taketh away the sin of the world." In contemplative delight, as his eyes fell upon Jesus, his heart meditated upon the precious Person of the Lamb of God, and he simply says, "Behold the Lamb of God!" He had learned to look upon the glory of the Lord. And what now? Two of his disciples left John, and began to follow Jesus. It was the right kind of ministry that; what I call the ministry of a Person. It is that which will lead souls to follow Jesus, and Jesus only. The ministry that attracts men to itself is not what is wanted. What is wanted is the ministry that attracts men's hearts to Christ, and Christ only. That is the finest ministry of all, and I have no doubt John was delighted when he saw the disciples leaving him, and following Jesus.

"Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye?" Is not that strik-

ing? Now, I do not doubt, but that from glory to-night, Jesus is saying to each heart in this hall, "What seek ye?" Come now, answer it! What seek ye? What is your great object in life? Is it money? Is it pleasure? Is it fame, or is it Christ? What seek ye? What were they seeking? It was Jesus, nothing but Jesus. "They said unto him, Master, where dwellest thou?" Think! What is the meaning of that? He said, "What seek ye?" They reply, "Master, where dwellest thou?" Jesus' dwelling-place was at Capernaum, a very ungodly city. It is called "his own city" in the ninth of Matthew. What did they want? They wanted to know the spot where they would be sure of finding Him. What does He say? "Come and see" (ver. 39). "They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour." They spent with Him about two hours. Honestly, now, did ever you spend two solid hours with Jesus? Did you? Then I will guarantee that if you spent two hours with Jesus, when you came out you wanted somebody else to do the same. I never knew a man yet that really enjoyed the presence of the Lord that did not want somebody else to enjoy it as well.

That is the peculiar beauty of Christianity. You want to get others to share in its joy. The more you give away the more you get; the more you scatter, the more you receive. You cannot be large-hearted without gaining. Why, those who do not give, have not got much enjoyment themselves. I find people say to me, We never speak about these things. They have, so to say, got their coats buttoned; I know the reason why. There is nothing inside. If they had plenty inside, it would soon come out. The moment

you get your heart full of Christ, you cannot keep it to yourself; you must tell it to every one else. If a man tries to keep it dark, then be sure the light is very feeble. The man who gets right into contact with Christ goes at once to tell others, his nearest friend perhaps, his father, mother, sister, or brother. It is always the same story. You always find the heart that has got hold of Christ wants other people to know Jesus too. I am not addressing you as a preacher, for I do not profess to be a preacher, but I speak to you because I enjoy the presence and love of the Lord myself, and I want others to enjoy the same privilege. It will do you good and will not do me any harm, but give me great joy, if you get to know the blessed Saviour I know.

What took place in our chapter? "One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon," and what does he say? "We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ" (John i. 41). We have found Him; come along and get to know Him too. I do not know that he got Peter to go right away; how long he took about the job I do not know, but this I know, he never gave it up until he got him. Have you been converted? Yes! Well! have you a brother who is not? Then start to-night to bring him to Jesus, and give him no peace until you bring him to Jesus. "And he brought him to Jesus" (ver. 42) is what we read of Andrew. I never heard of Andrew preaching, and you hear little more of Andrew in the Gospels—he knew the lad who had the five loaves and two fishes (John vi. 9)—but when you get up into the glory by-and-by, and see the Lord giving the

rewards, I think you will find that a big reward will be Andrew's. Do you not see that he was the means of the conversion of the man most used of God in those early gospel days, in bringing blessing to others. Look at it! I think I see Andrew on the day of Pentecost, when Peter is preaching, and the Lord using him to the blessing of three thousand souls, and getting them converted to God. I conclude Andrew would be rejoicing that he was the means of bringing Peter to Jesus. I cannot preach, he might say, but Peter can, and I was the means of bringing him to Jesus. Ah! think of that. Fellow-believer, you might be the means of bringing a great preacher to the Saviour. It was the word of a poor old shoemaker that led Spurgeon to Christ.

I was travelling in the West of England last year, and in the corner of the carriage there was a very distinguished looking English clergyman, with a book in his hands. I soon saw that it was the Bible. Presently the train stopped at a station, and the man sitting beside him got out. In a minute, in got a sweep, fresh from his morning's work, with his brush and bag, and as black as a chimney himself. He hesitated, as he noticed that there was room only for one, and said he would stand. "Sit down, my friend," said the parson, and the sweep sat down between me and the clergyman. The train went on, and at the next station the sweep got out. A man in the carriage grumbled out that it was a shame to let a man like that into the carriage; it was against the bye-laws and rules of the company, and they ought to be prosecuted for allowing it. "Oh," said I, "there is nothing in a little clean soot; there are worse things in the world than that." "Indeed there are," said the clergy-

man, "there is far greater dirt and degradation than that.' "What may that be?" said I. "It is the degradation of man's state as a sinner." "And how do you propose to meet that?" I asked. "There is only one way in which it can be met; it is by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ." So the poor sweep was the means of bringing the gospel into that carriage, and it came out splendidly. We talked on, and presently the clergyman said: "I will tell you how I was converted. I was a midshipman on board a ship, and when rounding Cape Horn on a very stormy night, a godly mate on board, in the same watch as myself, took me quietly alone, and spoke to me about Jesus. God blessed the words of the mate, and I was turned to the Lord through his testimony to Christ, on board that ship that night." "Thank God!" I said. "What happened then?" "I came home as soon as I could, for I had a brother here. I told him the gospel as clearly as I could, and, thank God! he too was converted. You perhaps would not recognise my brother, but he has been the means of sending eight hundred missionaries to heathen lands since that day."

At the time I thought that was just like Andrew. That is just the way the gospel spreads. If you enjoy Jesus, you will want somebody else to get to know Him. It does not need great preaching, or brilliant eloquent preachers to get people converted. I have heard of an infidel who was converted most simply. Perhaps you have heard of him. He did not believe in the Lord at all; and he lived in the West Indies. Sunday was a very miserable day with him; it is ever so with the unconverted. It is always a dismal day for them. Why, it is the happiest day of the week for me; the other six days are uncommonly happy, but Sunday

beats them all, I find, for one is usually freer to worship, and work for, the Lord. Not so did the infidel find his Sundays, for there was no racing, no theatre, or anything of that kind going on. Now there happened to be a godly minister preaching in a chapel near by, and some of the man's family went there. One Sunday he resolved to go to hear him; not exactly to listen to, but to criticise the preacher. It is the fashion; I do not mind if you do it; you are welcome to criticise me. I am here to warn you to flee from the damnation of hell, and the judgment of God. The infidel came every Sunday afterwards, and the minister thought, I must try to reach him, so he prepared a most wonderful set of sermons. When they were all delivered, lo, and behold! the infidel was converted, and made a happy confession of Christ. Well, thought the minister, he will be sure to come to tell me about it; but day by day went by, and he never came. The parson then resolved to go and see him. He called at the infidel's house, or rather, at the house of the man who had been an infidel, and was received most courteously. "I have heard good news of you," said the preacher. "It is quite true, thank God," was the man's answer, "I have got to know that my sins are forgiven," and he made a most happy confession of Christ. "I am so glad," said the preacher, "pray tell me which of the sermons was instrumental in causing this change?" "The sermons," said the man, "made not a bit of difference. They went over me like water off a duck's back." "Tell me, then, what has wrought the change?" "It happened one night while leaving your chapel. An old negress slipped, and fell upon the steps, and I just put out my hand and picked the old woman up. 'Oh! thank you, Massa,' she said;

'you love Jesus, don't you, my blessed Jesus?' These words went to my heart like an arrow, for I felt that this old black woman knew a Being, a Saviour, of whom I was totally ignorant." "You love Jesus, my blessed Jesus!" was what converted him. That is what will win souls for Christ.

The words, "We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus," tell us Andrew's sermon, and its effect. What a discovery these fishermen made. Andrew discovered the Messiah, and Simon discovered his Lord. I do not think he was easily brought to Jesus. He was a wonderfully natural man, Peter; and hence it is very likely that he was slow to go to Jesus. The last thing a man does is to go to Jesus. But Andrew somehow constrained him, and "he brought him to Jesus." That is just what I want to do to-night; I want to bring you to Jesus. "And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone" (John i. 42). Very simple words these! But that change of his name was, I doubt not, the moment of his conversion, the moment of his salvation.

I have no doubt Peter thought it was an extraordinary thing for the Lord to change his name. I have always been known by the name of Simon, and He has taken upon Him to change my name. "Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone." Let us see, then, the Lord's meaning. The changing of a name always implied that the one whose name was changed was subject to him who changed his name (*see* Gen. xvii. 5-15, xxxii. 28, xxxv. 10, xli. 45; Dan. i. 7, v. 12). At that moment the Lord told Simon, You belong to Me; from this minute you

are Mine. I do not think Peter forgot it, though he did not take in the truth fully. It was sovereign love that spoke there; and it was a divine Person who spoke to him. He knew what He was saying, and He changed Peter's name. That is what takes place when the Lord meets the sinner. You pass from being a sinner to being a saint. You pass through a change of name, just as Jacob, which means "supplanter," had his name changed to Israel, "a prince with God." What does the Lord say here? "Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone." And what is a stone? A bit of a rock! And who was the rock? Christ. Did Peter understand that? Perhaps not then; but you remember afterwards, when Jesus asked, "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?" that presently "Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, That thou art Peter" [He confirms his name], "and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 13-18).

What is the rock? Peter? Not a bit of it! Christ is the rock, and Peter is the stone put on the rock. That is a very good place to be. I never knew a stone yet that sunk through a rock. And I never knew anybody that was resting on the Rock of Ages, resting on Jesus, that was lost. Have you become a stone? How do you become a stone? Peter tells us: "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious; ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy

priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. ii. 4, 5). From that moment when Simon came to Jesus, and had his name changed to Peter, he became a stone. Though he did not then know what it was to be built in, he learned he was a stone, and soon after he knew what the building was of which he became an integral part. That, he learned, was the house of God, built upon the rock Christ. Peter was a stone, and so is every converted soul in this house to-night. My brother in Christ, you are a stone; and Christ would like you to know what it is to be a stone in His building. "To whom coming, as unto a living stone . . . ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house."

We become living stones as soon as we come in contact with Christ, who is the Living Stone. This moment the blessed Lord speaks of when He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live" (John v. 25). The voice of the Son of God went down into the heart of Simon, the son of Bar-Jona, quickening him, and I think Peter became acquainted with a change within himself, though I do not judge he quite understood what was wrapped up in the Lord's enigmatical expression. Indeed, he was like many a person whom the gospel reaches. He knows a change has come over him, but he cannot explain it. He becomes an altered man, though he cannot tell what has taken place. I think at that moment when Simon found Jesus, he apprehended that there was a tie between his soul and the Saviour. The voice of the Son of God entered into the heart of Peter, and what he heard was this, "Thou shalt be called Cephas,

which is by interpretation, A stone." You and I are stones from the time we derive from Christ. Do you know what a Christian is? He is a little bit of Christ. The Christian derives his life, his righteousness, his grace, and his sanctification from Him. He lives in the life of Christ, before God. I do not think Peter learned all that at that moment, but he learned it afterwards. It was, notwithstanding, a wonderful moment in his history; but he did not follow Jesus straight off.

What we read just now, in the fifth of Luke, showed that the Lord had gone on His way preaching the Word, but I do not think Peter followed Him then. He was like many souls, perhaps there are some here to-night, who though converted have not at once confessed Christ. I trust God's grace will touch their hearts, and lead them to boldly confess, and then fully follow the Lord.

Six months ago a young man came to me and said, "I want to thank you." "What for?" I said. "For the influence you have had on my life," he rejoined. "My dear fellow," I replied, "I never saw you before." "All the same, you have had an influence on my life. You remember sending me a book six months ago." "Oh," I said, "you are a student, and received my book, 'Young Men of Scripture.' Did you attend the students' meetings?" "Yes." "And were you converted then?" "I believe I was; but I made a great mistake—I did not confess Christ. Last night I heard a servant of God preaching, and he pressed upon us the necessity of confession, and I have come to see you about it." He did not follow outright at first, but now, he is a devoted servant of Christ. There are many cases like that.

But now let us look at the way in which the Lord leads Peter more fully to see the light, as recorded in the fifth of Luke. He was busy ministering the Word of God. "And it came to pass, that as the people pressed round upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret" (Luke v. 1). Christ was a wonderful minister of the word. He always spoke so that the people could hear Him. He wanted now to address this large company, and He looked round for a place where they could see Him and hear Him; in plain language, He looked for a pulpit. I do not mean a pulpit, as we know such. A platform does as well, so long as the speaker can see the people, and they can hear him. That is the point. And He "saw two ships standing by the lake; but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship" (vers. 2, 3). It was a wonderful scene, by the side of Galilee's blue lake at Bethsaida, "The House of Fish," or as others put it, "The Place of Nets"; where Simon and Andrew resided (John i. 44), and with their partners James and John, and their father Zebedee, plied their calling along with their hired servants (see Mark i. 16-20; Luke v. 10). Evidently, they had a good large fishing business.

They were at that moment mending their nets, when Jesus "entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land" (ver. 3). He does not say, Peter, lend me your boat! He took it. What did He teach by His action? Simon, you and all that you

have belong to Me; I taught you in the first of John that you belonged to Me. I changed your name, now I must teach you something else—that all you have belongs to Me. Then, "he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship."

I think, if you take the trouble to trace out the gospel narrative, you will find, that what the Lord ministered, was what we have related in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew; the seven parables, beginning with the sower, who went out to sow his seed. That seed fell, some by the wayside, some on a rock, some among thorns, while other seed fell on good ground, bringing forth fruit, some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold. As the Lord poured forth that wonderful ministry, Peter was listening; and doubtless some of that beautiful stream of precious truth went down into the fisherman's heart. It was a lovely scene. Picture the blue waters of the lake of Gennesaret, the surrounding ships, and the "great multitudes who stood on the shore" (Matt. xiii. 2), listening eagerly to this Prince of preachers. This was the most populous part of all Israel at the time, and along the western coast of the Sea of Galilee, and specially at Bethsaida, the fishing population was very large. True, they were a simple people, and I wish you were just as simple in heart as they.

Well, the Lord ministered to these poor simple folk, and when it was all over, He, as it were, said, "I am going to pay you, Peter, for the loan of your boat." "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught" (ver. 4). And what does Simon say? "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing." That was experience speaking, and what would reason add? When no fish could be taken by

us in the night-time, it is not likely they will be taken in the daylight. There were no fish taken there in the night, how then could you expect to catch them in broad daylight? That is what reason would say; but do you know what faith said? Faith is always obedient. Peter illustrates faith in his answer: "Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their net brake." Now some of you here to-night may say, I have been letting down the net for a long time, and yet I do not seem to get anything in it; I do not get a blessing. Never mind, let down the net again to-night. And if you let down your net at the voice of Jesus, there will happen in your case just what happened with Simon — you will get such a blessing you will not be able to hold it.

But see what happens now in Simon's history. To him this large haul of fish revealed the hand and presence of God. There was no room in Simon's boat for all the fish, and he is about to make another grand discovery as he sees the fish hauled over the boat's side. I think his eye would brighten at the sight, and doubtless his first thought be, What a grand day's fishing is this; this is the best haul we have ever had, for "they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink." Then, as Simon stands in his boat, he forgets all about the fish, and all about his business; he thinks only of Jesus and himself. "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (ver. 8). What a strange scene! What led that man to go down before Jesus in that way? Why fell he at Jesus' knees? I will tell you. It was the light which burst into his soul, the light from God, which

entered his heart. As he saw that wonderful catch of fish, the truth flashed into his soul. The light of God went anew into Peter's soul, and the deepest chambers of his heart were made manifest. He learns that he is in the presence of God. He learns his own sinfulness, though not a word was said about it, and he falls at Jesus' knees a repentant, self-judged, self-condemned man; and, I think, above all, self-condemned for this—I heard his voice months ago: He changed my name, but I never began to follow Him. Alas! I have never followed Him. He felt the sin of his soul doubly. He was in the power of real repentance and self-judgment.

Let me ask, Have you ever gone through a crisis like this? Have you ever got down at the feet of Jesus, confessing your guilt? If not, friend, you must. Peter was in his right place. Every Spirit-born soul goes through similar exercises. Scripture abounds in instances. Look at Job. Like all the rest of us, he was self-righteous, and self-complacent, till the light of God shone on him, and then see the change. For the first forty chapters of the book he is as busy as he can be justifying himself, but then he sees God, and collapses, saying, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job xlii. 5, 6). Down comes the patriarch, and down comes this stalwart fisherman. It reminds me of another scene, in Isaiah's history, where he says: "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto

another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. vi. 1-3). And when Isaiah saw and heard all this, he cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts" (ver. 5). The glory of the Lord's presence broke Isaiah down, even as it did Job, and where the patriarch and the prophet were we now behold Simon, the stalwart Galilean fisherman. Where is he? Down in the dust before Jesus.

My friend, have you ever been brought down there? Thank God if you have. I have been down there, and felt Jesus lift me up. I have known, too, what God said to Job in his day, and what he said to Isaiah. And what was that? Just what Jesus says to Simon here—"Fear not!" Jesus said to him, as it were, I am enough for you. That is what Simon got. He found that he could not do without the Lord, all unworthy and sinful, as he learned himself to be. When down in the depths of repentance, and self-judgment, and utterly broken down before the Lord, he learned His grace in a very special way, as Jesus said to him, "Simon, fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men" (Luke v. 10). In effect He said, "I changed your name last time; I shall change your occupation now." When Simon first met the Lord his name was changed. Before that moment he was a sinner going about in this scene only anxious to catch fish, but now Jesus says to him, "Henceforth thou shalt catch men." Blessed, joyful mission!

But, perhaps you say to me, Have we all to give up our business to become Christians? Certainly not. That is not at all necessary, nor is it the point here.

The picture before us here is of one who turns his back upon what was his world. I read now that, "When they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him" (ver. 11). They feel compelled to follow Jesus now. It is not a question of, must I give up my business, nor was it simply a question of turning the back upon the ordinary occupation. Peter, I have no doubt, says, I have done with the fish; I am going to follow the Lord. I am going to catch men. And he began to follow Him, although at that time his trade was more prosperous than ever.

When are you going to begin to follow the Lord? Do I hear you say, I should like to come to Jesus when I am getting near death? You only want to give Him then the remnant of a badly spent life. No, that is not what I care to see; I like when a young man comes to Christ, at the outset of his life, when he is fresh, and when he can give the greater part of his days to the service of the Lord. I sometimes see, as I go down a street, a placard with the words, "Retiring from business." I know what that means. The business is retiring from the man. A man never retires from business when it is prospering. When he thinks of retiring, he sells out. He is not such a fool as to give it up when it is prosperous. If on the wane, most likely he cannot sell it, so he then puts his notice, "Retiring from business," in the window. Business was not retiring from Peter the day he gave it up. Never was it so bright as when he turned his back upon it, and went out to follow the Lord.

There are some here perhaps who have never been the Lord's before. Now, I beseech you, yield Him

your heart, your life, your whole strength—yourself—spirit, soul, and body. Was it not a proper, and a beautiful thing, in this case that Peter followed Him? I think I can see him go home, and, meeting his wife, tell her, that he means to follow the Master. Possibly she inquired, Have you caught any fish? Yes! Never had such a catch. And, where are they? I left them on the shore; I am going to follow the Master. And who is to keep us if you do that? How are we to be sustained if you have given up fishing, and are going to follow Him? "Come ye after me," were his words (Mark i. 17), says Peter; He told me to follow Him, and I am now going to obey Him. It must have been a testing time for Peter as well as his wife, for at this moment in his own house "Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever" (Mark i. 30). You see Peter was a nice, kind-hearted man; he took his mother-in-law into his house. Not many young men take their mothers-in-law in; they are often regarded as rather a doubtful blessing. That is the way of the world, my friend. But there she was, sick, and Jesus, going in, cured her, so that the fever left her, and she was able to minister unto them. It is wonderful to see the ways the Lord takes of putting the soul right with Him. Do you think that when Peter started to follow Jesus after this, his wife would raise any objections? I trow not. The Lord had by the saving of her mother's life won her heart. I think she would say, It is all right now. Stick to Him, cleave to Him, follow Him; do not keep any distance from Him, for I can trust Him now. He has shown me that He has an interest in me. That is the way God often works. The Lord came into Peter's house, and the wife's heart became assured of His deep interest

in all that concerned the house. This fisherman is called to follow Jesus, and to make his home circumstances easy, confidence is begotten in the wife's heart by His care of those at home.

Friends, He is a wonderful Lord you and I are called to follow. The Lord give you grace to follow Him. Who will start? But to find Him is one thing; to follow Him is another. You learn what it is to become "a living stone" as you come in contact with Christ, and you learn to follow Him when He eclipses everything else in your soul's vision. Possibly you say, If I were in different circumstances I would follow Christ. No, you would not. Your circumstances are the best if only you knew it. You know what reins are for; you know what they are to the horse. They keep the creature in order, and so do your circumstances. They keep you in order. If the banks are broken down, out comes the river, and spoils everything. If the reins break, what happens? There is generally a smash. Do you see? Do not you be troubled about your circumstances. You will find that the Lord will sustain you in any circumstances, and even make them the channels of His grace. Cleave to the Lord, and be devoted to the Lord. Give Him the right place in your heart here, and He will sustain you. "FOLLOW THOU ME" would seem to be His last word to Peter (John xxi. 22). Has it no voice to you and me?

CHAPTER II.

TRUTH—WHAT IS IT?

(JOHN xviii. 36-38.)

PILATE'S question, "What is truth?" is, I believe, the great question of the moment. It is of vast importance to have the truth. It is a profound mistake not to have it, if it is to be had. Many a man has it not. The Christian has it. The believer in Christ has it. I remember many years ago one of the Professors of this University, with whom I was very intimate, and at whose house I was one evening, after a long conversation, turned, and said to me, "Look here, doctor, I am earnestly seeking after the truth." "I have got it, sir," I replied. "What do you mean?" "I mean this, I have Christ, and He is the truth."

Christ is the truth, and I want to draw your attention to-night to these precious words of the Saviour which I have read—uttered by Him when surrounded by everything that the enmity of man could bring against Him, when betrayed, denied, blindfolded, and passed on from one careless high priest to another, and then trundled away to the judgment-seat of a godless man, as Pilate undoubtedly was. Yet in the face of all this, what was His attitude? Look at Christ! Look how quiet, how calm, albeit how sad. Then it was He said: "To this end was I born, and

for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." Pilate carelessly says "What is truth?" and then turns his back on Truth personified. Ah! my friends, there is many a man doing that to-day. Pilate is not the only man who has turned his back on the Truth.

What I greatly desire, in this course of meetings which I will hold with some of you, is that the truth, God's truth, may simply pass before us, and I shall make no apology for Scripture. I believe it to be the Word of God. I believe it to be a revelation from God, of His mind, of His thoughts, of His purposes, and of His counsels; that we have in the Scriptures the truth written, and that in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ we have truth incarnate. The result is, that the man who receives the truth of Scripture, in the power of the Holy Ghost, will invariably be brought into contact with Christ, who is the Truth.

First then, you may ask me, "What is truth?" I do not know that I can make it plain to you; but so far as I can grasp the meaning of truth, it is this: Truth is the exact, the perfect, and absolute expression and delineation of that which is. It is the identity of the statement and the fact stated. I could not say, that God was the Truth. He is true. God is true, but of the Lord Jesus Christ it is said, "That grace and truth came by him" (John i. 17). Nay, more, He Himself has said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John xiv. 6). He was the Truth; and I hope to show you that He was the truth about everything—the truth about God; the truth about man; the truth about the heart of God, the nature of God, and the claims of God; and the truth, moreover, about

man in every possible relation of his being. He was no mere man, for He was verily God; nevertheless He was a real, true, perfect man. Get hold of that, I implore you. That Jesus, whom we have read about, was a real, true, perfect man, as much a man as I am standing here before you this evening, sin alone excepted. As man He was in this scene to declare God, and to divinely meet man. "To this end," He says, "was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." None could reveal God, none could unveil the love of God, or declare the heart of God, other than He who came from God. There was none who knew the claims of God, and could meet those claims, except the One who came from God. He must come from God, if He is to bring God to me, and He must be a man, a veritable man, to bring me to God; because I am a sinful man, a sinner. So are you. Sin carries its consequences and merits judgment, and the truth as to this alone is seen fully in Christ.

In the Lord Jesus Christ the absolute truth about everything is beautifully blended. The perfect and whole truth about everything is seen in every part, and not one side of the truth more than another. We get the truth that "God is love," for instance, and see the reality of the truth of God's love in Christ's self-sacrifice, for He gave Himself that He might unveil the heart of God to us, and bring us to God by His death.

In the scene before us Pilate is in the presence of Jesus, the Truth, and, when He speaks, turns his back upon Him. I trust you will not imitate him; because we live in a day when men are slighting Christ. I find many young men who are Pilate's followers; in

fact I speak the truth when I say that perhaps nine young men out of ten whom I meet are not believers, but, alas! are serious doubters. I want to know if they are happier, if they are better, or if they are holier men; I have never found it to be so yet. I can recollect, when I was an unconverted young man, and when the truth was unknown to me. I know, too, what I was after I was converted. I know what a wonderful change came over me when I came to know the Truth, and was brought into contact with the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence I want you to get into contact with Christ.

Now observe this, if Jesus be not what He said He was, if He be not what He declared Himself in the Gospels to be, you must repel Him, and everything about Him altogether. Jesus said that He was the Son of God. Was He the Son of God? He says, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." Only the Son could make the Father known. Surely, as He Himself says, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven" (John iii. 13). This claim must either be accepted or rejected. I must either own what He says, I must acknowledge the truth that He came from heaven, or refuse absolutely to believe it, and proclaim Christ to be not an impostor, but One who knowingly spoke what was not true. If He said a single word which was not true, then He cannot be the Truth. I do not mince matters, for I must either own Him to be what He said He was, or else deny Him all right to the allegiance of my heart and conscience.

Although I thus speak, I delight to acknowledge,

and heartily believe that He is what He said He was; and I have proved Him to be what He said He was—a Saviour. If you have never known Him as your Saviour, let me now urge you to put Him to the test. You accept the truth of that which He says concerning Himself, and then you will find out that you need a Saviour, and that He is that Saviour, and He alone. I know well that men would like to set aside His claim on the ground that they do not need saving. But you have to meet God, and where are you going to spend eternity? How are you going to meet God? You have to go into eternity! Where will you spend it? Serious questions these! Again, are you to-night fitted to meet God? Is your conscience purged? Are your sins purged away? Are you fitted to pass into the presence of a God of infinite holiness? I tell you frankly you are not, unless you have had to do with Christ. If you have had nothing to do with Him, you are not ready. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth," said the Lord Jesus, and then He adds immediately, "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

I come therefore to the question, an important one for you and myself—Have I got the truth? If I am not of the truth, I have not heard His voice. The man who has not heard the voice of the Son of God does not possess the truth. You can hear other voices; for there are plenty of voices nowadays. The voice of the truth is that of Him, who could say, "I am the truth," and who could say to the man, who told Him, he had power to put Him to death, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above; therefore he

that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." He it is who says, "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." Then, have you heard His voice?

Well, you say, I do not know that He exists. You would soon know that He exists if you heard His voice. Oh, but, you say, I was never brought into contact with Him. More the pity; because He says, "Every one that is of the truth hears my voice." The confession of a man, that he has not heard the voice of Jesus, is a tacit confession that he has not got the truth. Now, I say again, above all things get the truth. I do not care what things I lose, or what I have not got, if I have got the truth. Give me the truth—the truth about everything, about God, about myself, about righteousness, about the claims, and the heart of God. "God is love!" How do you know that? you ask. He gave His Son. "God is light!" What is the meaning of that? Light reveals all that is unlike, or opposed to itself; it touches the root of things, because light makes manifest. "God is love." The birth of Jesus, and the cross —the death of Jesus, prove the love of God. They are the demonstrations of that wonderful truth. "God is light." Will He pass over sin? Impossible! The Word of God is simple and plain upon this point. "All have sinned;" furthermore it says, "The wages of sin is death." People try to explain death away, but you cannot. You may gild your hearses, drape your coffins with costliest flowers, decorate your graveyards, and put up magnificent monuments on your tombs, but you cannot get rid of death; and death, we are told, entered into the world by sin (Rom. v. 12)—the sin of the first man—Adam.

But death is not the end of man. If death were the end of man, then there would be no resurrection; but, I have learned the truth of the resurrection, through Christ. The man Christ Jesus, for God's glory, and the blessing of sinners, reached death and the grave as the end of a pathway of perfect obedience and dependence. God could not do otherwise than raise, and glorify Him, and He has done it. The first man reached the grave as the fruit, and penalty of sin, and if you go into death, you will lie there, just because you are a sinner. But I know a Man, who went into death, and came out of it.

I hear His voice to-night, saying, "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." I have also heard Him say, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead" [in their sins of course] "shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live" (John v. 25). Oh! what a wonderful thing this is, a man springs into life, into eternal life, by hearing the voice of the Son of God!

The first great truths I learn then, are these, that, "God is love," and "God is light." All is made manifest in Jesus. The end Christ had in view is here stated. He comes down into the scene, and finds man a sinner in his sins, under the sentence of death, and passing on to it, and He passes into death for him, that he might be saved.

Supposing death were to overtake you, what then? You may not be terribly afraid at the thought of death, but what comes after death? No man can tell that, you say. I beg your pardon, I know what comes after death. I know One who has been into death, and has come out of it. The Christian—if he die—departs to be with Christ, who

has been into death, and is now at the right hand of God, a living mighty Saviour, who leads the one that trusts in Him, into eternal life, and sets him down in the glory, where He now is. Every one who is of the truth hears His voice. That is it. It is very simple. Until I hear His voice, it is quite clear, I have not got the truth.

Now let us inquire, What is the truth about man? Man is a sinner. "The Son of Man is come to seek, and to save, that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10). Is it true that man is lost? It must be true, or Christ has told a lie. He says, "The Son of Man is come to seek, and to save, that which was lost." You might turn to me, and say, But who are lost? All, without exception. Have you heard His voice? Have I heard His voice? If not, I am yet lost; you are yet lost. You may say, But surely you do not put us all down as lost? The Son of God says it, and He makes no mistakes.

Not long ago, a friend of mine was preaching in this town to a very large audience. At the close of the meeting, I came in contact with an excessively intelligent, and withal earnest young fellow, one of your own set. I got into conversation with him, and asked him if he were saved. He said, "How can I know?" "Well," I replied, "I know that I am saved, thank God. Don't you know it?" "No," he replied, "but I am doing my best to live a proper, moral, straight, and square life." "Quite right," I said, "that is exactly what you should do." "Won't that have some weight with God?" he asked. "Won't that curry favour with God?" "Well," I said, "stop a moment. Will your life compare with the life of Jesus?" He thought a minute, and then said, "What

do you mean?" "I mean this—Do you think your life will compare with the life of Jesus?" After thinking a little, he replied, "I could not say that. I am doing my best to live a moral, proper, and square life, but I cannot say that it could compare with that of Jesus." "Well then," I said, "you won't do for God; because only one man will suit Him, and that is Jesus; He is the Truth. He is what a man should be. A man should be holy, spotless, sinless, undefiled, absolutely devoted and true to God. That is what Jesus was." He thought a moment, and then turning round sharply to me, said, "If what you say is true, every man is lost." "Yes," I said, "you have hit the nail on the head this time. That is exactly what Scripture says. Every man is lost, and 'the Son of Man is come to seek, and to save, that which was lost.'"

So you see, my friends, Christ brings out the truth as to our state. We are sinners; and, if sinners, we are under sentence of death, and lost. If you will turn to another portion of Scripture, where, in parabolic guise, the Lord brings out the truth, whether it be the shepherd who sought his sheep, the woman who lost her money, or the father receiving his son, you will find that the one word He uses is "Lost." The sheep was lost, the silver was lost, the prodigal was lost. It is man's state before God, and, what I urge upon you is, that He comes to you this evening, and bears witness to the truth of the condition of man —hence your condition.

Pilate turns from Jesus with the question, "What is truth?" Contemptuously, he turns his back upon Him, who is the Truth. Pilate certainly desired to save Jesus. He did not want to put the Lord to

death. I do not believe he had any animus against Christ; but, mark, Pilate got an opportunity of knowing the truth, and missed it. That is the point. I do not say he was not touched. I do not say he was not roused. I think he was; he wanted to let the Lord off. He had a feeling of awe, a feeling that he had better not touch Him. At length, when he had made up his mind that He was guiltless, and three times had said, "I find no fault in him," he pronounced sentence against Him. "I have found no cause of death in him; I will therefore chastise him and let him go," gives evidence of how impressed Pilate was. But the Jews clamoured for his death, so he gave way, and was about to sign his death-warrant, apparently, when there came a message from his wife, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him" (Matt. xxvii. 19). After this, I think, he desired more strenuously than ever to let Jesus go. When he met Jesus, He gave him the opportunity of choosing the truth, but he failed to take it. He then thought he might release Him to the people, for at that time, as an expression of his clemency, he allowed a prisoner to go free. But the people would not have Him: "Not this man, but Barabbas," they cried. They would not have Christ, and Pilate yielded to their demand, for he was afraid of the world.

I will tell you one thing, which would be most difficult for you to do, and that is, for you to stand up for Christ. You would fearlessly expose yourself to disease, you would lead a forlorn hope, and go boldly up to the cannon's mouth, with the chance of having your head blown off; but you would find it next to impossible to stand up for Christ among your

comrades. How do you know? I will ask you this question, Have you stood up for Christ? Has the Lord said of you, "There is a man, that is really for Me"? I will tell you, by so much, as we are influenced by the world, just so much are we under its thumb. Just, by so much, as one wants the favour of the world, so much are we governed by it. Pilate was going to let Jesus off, but the Jews, whom he professedly governed, really governed him, as they cried out, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend." Ah! Pilate did not want to lose the patronage of Cæsar. He did not want to lose the favour of the world. Satan knows the weak spot in every man's heart, and knows how to touch it too. The world's approval was worth more to Pilate than the possession of the truth. Cæsar's friends must side with Cæsar, and Jesus' friends must side with Jesus. Pilate preferred the friendship of Cæsar, and, making up his mind irrevocably, parted with Christ. He got a splendid chance, but lost it. Do not you imitate him. You have the chance to-night of taking Christ's side; you have an opportunity, every man in this hall has an opportunity. "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. x. 9, 10). The man who will take his stand for the Lord Jesus Christ will find what God's salvation is.

Pilate then dooms Him to die. Jesus goes forth wearing a crown of thorns and a purple robe. He, who was the Truth, wore upon His head the emblem

of the curse. One thing comes out clearly in the cross of Christ, and that is His self-sacrifice. He goes to the cross, and there Jesus brings out the truth as to God's nature when sin is in question. He who knew no sin was made sin, and on that tree God forsook Him. We read elsewhere, "From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour, and about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli! Eli! lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. xxvii. 45, 46). He was then bearing witness, as to what the truth regarding God's judgment of sin was. It was this, that sin could only separate the soul from God. He was forsaken by God, when He was bearing the sins of many. In the very moment of bearing those sins He made atonement for them. He presented His precious life to God, and He who knew no sin, was made sin, that He might put it away by the sacrifice of Himself.

Then we notice Jesus cried out, "It is finished." What was finished? By His death He met all the claims of God in righteousness, and consequently can meet all the claims of our consciences. "He suffered for sins once, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. iii. 18). Christ has accomplished redemption by His sacrifice. He has borne our sins, and put them away. He has annulled death, and met the claims of God. He, as man, went into the grave, and God has taken Him out of the grave; and He is now at the right hand of God, and the Holy Ghost has come down to tell us that He will quickly come again. Have you then heard and believed the gospel of your salvation? Have you heard the Word, believed the Truth, and received the gospel

of your salvation? Oh! to-night may you hear Him. I have heard Him, and my heart bows down with gratitude when I hear that dying Saviour utter the words, "It is finished." I believe it as I hear it. "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

Well, I am brought down by the sense of my need as a sinner, and, as a sinner, look to Him, and get the knowledge of what He has done. It is all finished, and now the question is very simple, Is Christ to be your Saviour? Are you to be Christ's, is He to be yours. Will you hear His voice to-night? "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." Oh! wonderful fact. He that heareth His voice is of the truth. What have I heard Him witness? To this—that man was lost, undone. And then I get the other side of the truth, the love of God has come out in the giving up of His only Son to become the substitute of sinners, that He might save every one who believes on Him. Do you think it is a poor thing to become a Christian? You never made a greater mistake in your life. It is the grandest thing in the world. Ah! but you say, "You are old and grey-haired." Well, I was converted when I was twenty, and I am deeply thankful that I have known the Lord all these years. I never regret that I was won for Jesus when I was just turned twenty. You turn to Jesus just now. You could not have a better opportunity, and I implore you, hear the voice of the Son of God. Do not forget this, "Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice." Have you heard it?

CHAPTER III.

A Publican's Guest; or, Two Seekers, and what Each Found.

(Luke xix. 1-10.)

EVERY one in this audience to-night will at once perceive that there are two exceedingly anxious seekers in this passage, and it is not to be wondered at that each found the other. I read of Zaccheus, that "he sought to see Jesus." The Lord Himself says, "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (ver. 10). These two are the complement, the one of the other. I find a Saviour seeking a sinner, and I get a sinner seeking a Saviour. Of course they meet. I never knew a man yet, and I never expect to meet one, that really sought to find Jesus, and did not do so. No, I have been hunting for the last seven-and-thirty years for the man in this world that wanted Christ, and could not find Him. The man does not exist.

If you want Christ, dear friend, I have very good news for you; He wants you. You may say to me, But does it not say in Scripture, "There is none that seeketh after God." That is quite true; the Word of God does say so. "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God" (Rom. iii. 11). That is what man is by nature, but when light breaks

in upon man's soul, it sets him seeking to find out God. When divine light breaks in upon the soul of man—I do not say how it comes, for God has wonderful ways of letting the light into the soul—it makes him feel that there is something wrong with him, that there is a void, a vacancy, an emptiness, a want; that he is not satisfied. That is the first thing. Then, very likely, he will find out that he has to meet God. You have to meet Him; so have I. Every sinner has to meet Him sooner or later. The man finds out that he has to meet God, and the next thing he will discover is, that he is not fit to meet Him. Let me ask you, Has the light ever entered your soul yet? Has light from God entered your soul, the dark chambers of your heart, my friend? Have you found out, that you not only have to meet God, but that you are not fit to meet Him? Ah! I will tell you what it is; the man who gets his heart illuminated, gets earnest, begins to get anxious, and says, How can I meet God, and where can I find Him?

Whenever that is the case, God puts the gospel in his way, just as you have it in this remarkable scene here. Here was a man who was very desirous of seeing Jesus. Now, I wonder, if God were writing your history—and you must not think He does not take a note of your work—I wonder if God's recording angel has ever been able to write down, in the page of your life's history, that you are anxious to see Jesus. You have desired much, and you have desired to see plenty of things in this world. There have been many desires in your heart, and perhaps they have been gratified; but has there ever been in your history, such a record by God as this, that you desired to see Jesus. It is a wonderful moment in the history of a

man when he wants to see Jesus, and when, in plain language, he sets out to seek the Saviour.

I quite admit that there may have been, and there usually is, some kind of preparation in the man's soul for his search. The heart is quickened, or the conscience is troubled, and there is a desire after Christ. It is a wonderful moment when the soul sets out in search of Christ. It may be through the achings of an empty heart; for some people are led to seek Christ through these. Others, again, are driven to Jesus, through the writhings of a guilty conscience. You will find, all through Scripture, illustrations of this. Look at Nicodemus! What drove him to Christ? His conscience. If I take the woman in the fourth of John, what brought her to Jesus? Undoubtedly, it was the aching of her heart. Her heart was empty. Aye, and there is many an empty heart in this hall to-night. You are having your fill of the world, but you are as empty as a deaf nut, and when the nut is cracked—and the day of doom is coming—its condition is manifest. If you are honest, you will admit your heart is empty and unsatisfied; you know what I mean. There is no satisfaction in it. But what did that woman find, when she came to the Saviour? Satisfaction in Christ.

Now, Zaccheus was drawn to the Lord in a remarkable way. Doubtless he had heard of Jesus previously, for the Lord had passed near, if not through Jericho on a previous occasion. He never passed through it again. That is what gives the story its great force. The man had one last opportunity, and he took it, of getting into contact with Jesus. Mark you, he embraced it; he seized it. I can understand why the Lord says, "Make haste and come down, for to-day I

must abide at thy house" (ver. 5). Suppose the man had put it off, and declined the Saviour's call, as you know many of you here have declined His call for many a day, what would have been the result? He would never have got another opportunity. Jesus never passed that way again. Let me say then, before I go further, it may be the last time that God will give you a call; it may be the last opportunity that God will give you of hearing anything about His blessed Son. That is why I reiterate, with all my soul, the words that we sang to-night, "Decide for Christ to-day." How much is wrapped up in that word "To-day! To-day!"

Now, in reading Scripture, it is always interesting to observe the context. Sometimes you will find in reading the Word of God, that some circumstance leads to the unfolding of a parable, and then that you get an instructive narrative connected with the doctrine which the Lord enforces. On the other hand, you may find that you get a striking narrative, and out of it flows a statement by the Lord of unspeakable importance. That, I think, we have in this Scripture, when the Lord says, as a reason why He should go to Zaccheus' house that day, that "the Son of Man is come to seek, and to save, that which was lost" (ver. 10).

Before dwelling upon the narrative, I should like or a few moments to draw your attention to verse 10. That is just what Jesus tells us to-night. Though we have not the same kind of opportunity of coming to Jesus, as Zaccheus had, of getting to the Lord—for He was then in this world—still our need, the guilt of our souls, and their state, before God, is described, and marked in verse 10, in the clearest way. What does

Jesus say? "For the Son of Man is come to seek, and to save, that which was lost." Oh, but, you say, you do not mean to tell me that I am lost? I do not tell you, that you are lost, but I will tell you what the Word of God says, "The Son of Man is come to seek, and to save, that which was lost." And if you are not a person saved by grace, do you know where you are? If a man be not in the enjoyment of the gospel, and if he has not received forgiveness, then he has not peace, nor eternal life. He is still lost. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." What? Lost? Yes. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world" (that is Satan; I hope you know whom you follow, if you are not Christ's) "hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4). I find, then, the distinct statement, made by the Spirit of God, that the man who has not received Jesus as his Saviour, is lost.

I know there are people, who would say to me, Oh! I thought a man would be lost if he died in his sins? Scripture does not put it that way at all. And you say, Will a man not be lost if he die in his sins? He is lost before he dies; and, if he dies in his sins, then he has to meet something else; he has to meet judgment and damnation, the consequences of those sins. I do not think you and I had better tone down the truth. God knows what is ahead of us. I do not think our Lord Jesus Christ came into this world, "to seek, and to save, that which was lost," and I do not think He went to the cross, and bore the judgment of sin upon it, if there were no judgment, no punishment ahead. To put it simply and plainly, the Word

of God declares that we are lost, every one of us, if we have not known Jesus. There is but one word applies to us, it is the word lost! And after death there comes the judgment. It is a solemn word that; I would to God that every man in this hall to-night felt the weight of it. I know we live in a day when men tell us, God will never judge people for their sins; God is too good, too kind, too loving to judge them. Well, I again repeat, dear friends, that you and I had better listen to the words of the Lord Jesus, and I find Him saying here, "The Son of Man is come to seek, and to save, that which is lost."

Oh! but, you say, that refers to Zaccheus the publican, and from his occupation—a tax-gatherer—we know what sort of a man he was. Well, do you think your life will compare with his? Do you give half of your goods to the poor? He did. Will any man stand up in this meeting and say, "The half of my goods I give to the poor." No, he cannot. I am not going to stand up and say it, because I do not. Nor do I expect to be saved on that ground. He says, "Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and, if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold" (ver. 8). I think honestly that Zaccheus' life will compare most favourably with that of any living man here. Every soul, without exception, has to be saved, but not on that ground. The Lord knew that he was lost, and then out came the glorious truth, "The Son of Man is come to seek, and to save, that which was lost." Man is a lost sinner. On every man, old or young, rich or poor, learned or illiterate, the Spirit of God fixes that word—"LOST."

You have the same truth brought out in the fifteenth

of Luke by the blessed Lord. I find Him, in the figure of the Shepherd, seeking the lost sheep; He goes out to seek and save it. The same idea is present in the lost bit of money. The woman swept the house till she found it. And when the father received back the prodigal, he said, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Luke xv. 24). The Lord points out there the truth as to man's condition. He is away from God; he is no longer with God. He is lost; and if he be not delivered by sovereign grace, where is he for ever? He remains where he is. Therefore the Lord announces that He is come "to seek, and to save, that which was lost." I know this is not a very palatable doctrine nowadays. But it is not a question of whether it be palatable or not. Is it true? is the question. It is far better to know the truth, because if I do not know the truth, I do not see where I am, I do not learn my state before God, I do not learn what my condition is, and in consequence do not seek to remedy it. Consequently it is of unspeakable importance that every one should know where he is, and what his condition is in the sight of God. Lost, is the emphatic word which describes the condition of every unsaved man.

The Lord Jesus says here, "The Son of Man is come to seek, and to save, that which was lost." What does He mean? Let me illustrate it. I was passing along Princes Street a few years ago. It was a fine bright, sunny afternoon. I came to a cross street where a little lassie, about five years of age, was standing. She was in floods of tears, with her hat in her hand, and her hair hanging down her back. The child was the picture of misery and distress. I was

naturally touched. "What is the matter, my little one?" I said. She lifted up her hands, and piteously said, "I am lost." That one word "lost" explained all. She was away from home, was alone, and lost, in this big city, with no one to help her. That, dear friends, is where you are. You are away from home, and away from God. It is a great thing to know you are lost. I debated with myself what I should do for the child, and thought of handing her to a policeman, when I noticed a girl of about eighteen running down the street, as hard as she could, and looking this way and that, as if she wanted to find some one she had lost. At last she saw the little lass, and rushing up to her she cried, "O Jennie, Jennie, I've found ye." The little creature, immensely relieved, rushed at once into her sister's arms, and I thought, that is just my history. The Saviour has come out to seek, and to save me. That child was found by her sister, and the man who speaks to you, to-night, has been found by the Saviour. Have you been so found? I have got to know the truth, that the Son of Man is come to seek, and to save, that which is lost. Oh! friends, let us face the truth. It is good to do so. It is an immense mistake not to know the truth. It is of paramount importance to know the truth about ourselves, about our souls. I must know where I am. It is an immense thing to get light as to what my state before God is, for light shows me just what, and where I am, and also reveals to me who, and what Jesus is.

An old man came into my consulting room a few years ago. He was a stranger from the country. "Doctor," said he, "will you give me a little medicine?" "What for?" I asked. "Oh! I do not feel very well."

"But," said I, "what is the matter?" "I have got a little pain here," putting his hand to his breast. "What is the source of the pain? Let me see the place where the pain is?" He opened up his coat and vest, and revealed to me a huge pulsating tumour, which indicated to me that the man's life was in jeopardy. "How long has that been there?" I asked. "What?" said he. "That," and I put his hand on it. "Dear me," he said, "I never knew it was there. Is it dangerous?" "That is not the point," said I; "how long has it been there?" "Well, Doctor, I never knew it was there at all." "It has been there for many weeks, possibly many months." "Well, I never knew it was there." Then he asked what it was, and I told him that it was an aneurism. He next asked if it was dangerous, and I had to tell the man the truth. "Do you think I shall have long to live," he next asked, and I said, "Do you want to know the truth?" "Yes, I do." "Then I do not think that you will live very long," was my reply. I then asked him, "Are you converted?" "No," he replied, "I never thought much about those things." "Well," I said, "I do not think that you can be cured, and I think it is about time you got ready for the march." Thank God! he did get ready. He went into the Royal Infirmary, there found Jesus as his Saviour, and soon died, prepared to meet God.

Perhaps you will say, You are a funny doctor! Well! I think it is best to tell people the truth. If you do not want the truth, do not come to me. If you do not want the truth, spiritually, do not come back next Sunday, because we must have the truth. The truth is worth everything. And what is the truth? I was a lost sinner, and so are you, my friend. But by

sovereign grace, I know what it is to be saved, or I would not be speaking to you this evening. I know what got into that old man's mind, after I told him the truth as to his body. It was this: I know perfectly well my days on earth are short, and I know I am not fit to meet God. I will lose no time; and he did not lose any time. He was a wise old man. I traced him out, and I heard of his evening days. In these he came to Jesus, and passed away rejoicing in the Saviour's love. I will tell you what it is, my friend, you may not have a malady, that will cut you off so quickly, but you are nothing more nor less than a target for death to shoot his arrows at. And I should not wonder if the archer, Death, were standing, the string of his bow drawn tight with arrow set, and that, ere the morning light, that arrow may have found its target in your heart, and that you have passed into eternity. Tell me, into what kind of eternity would you go, if to-morrow found you there? Whether you are an old man, or a young man, a man gone o'er the summit of life's hill, or a man in the heyday of youth, I put it to you, Are you ready? Not unless you have come to Jesus! If you have come to Jesus, then, thank God, you are ready; you are saved. "For the Son of Man is come to seek, and to save, that which was lost." It is a great thing for the soul to discover, I am lost. It must be learned sooner or later. The truth must do its work in the soul.

I do not dislike the idea of being lost, and there is no hardship in hearing that truth, when along with it I hear these words, "The Son of Man is come to seek, and to *save*, that which is lost." If a man were told that he was lost, and that there was no Saviour, it would be bitter indeed. If there were not a single

chance of my returning to God, and if there were no Redeemer, and no redemption, it would be bitter, and bad, my friend; but God tells me I am a lost man in one breath, and in the next, He presents to me a loving, living Saviour. That is the very thing I want. What I need, as a lost sinner, is what the grace of God provides for me—a Saviour. And let me ask you, Did you ever think calmly that the blessed Son of God left the realms of glory, and came into this world to seek you and me? Did you ever ask Him to come? He tells us He came to seek, and to save, that which was lost. It was His own heart that brought Him. His love prompted Him: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John iii. 16). The blessed Son of God became a man, and came into this scene to seek, and to save, that which was lost. Glorious tidings! And, has He not sought you, worldly man, time and again? Does He not seek to attract you to Him now? I will tell you what has happened. You have hitherto managed to evade His grasp; you have eluded Him; you have kept Him at arm's length. Do you think you are wise; do you think you evince wisdom by this?

It is a startling thing to say, but I know well its truth, that if you draw near to a worldly man, to tell him about God's salvation, he will avoid you. He will shrink from you, as though he feared you wished to infect him with small-pox, or some other terrible disease. This only brings out the real state of the heart, and the blinding, deadening power of sin. It only shows where the sinner is with regard to the Lord.

On the other hand, Christ is the joy of the believer's heart, and there is nothing sweeter to his ear than to

hear about Him. If I meet you, and it turns out that I know some intimate friend of yours, who is also a great friend of mine, why, at once, there is a bond of union linking us together. I am a Christian, and every Christian is my brother. I was walking down Leith Walk some time ago, when I overtook two men. One of them remarked as I passed, "It is sweet to hear of Jesus." I was pinned to the spot. Jesus! why, that was the name of my Saviour. I confess I was arrested. I said to myself, These men must be two of my brethren, two of the same family as myself. If you meet a Christian in a tram, or a train, your heart begins to warm up immediately. You say, But my heart does not warm up. No, of course not; you are not a Christian. That is the reason. I will tell you why; you have never learned His grace to you as a lost sinner, but when you learn that He has saved you, a wonderful change will take place.

"For the Son of Man is come to seek, and to save, that which was lost." How does He save? He saves by His death; He saves by the work He accomplished for us on the cross. The only way we can be saved is through the death of the Saviour. Sin is on us; we have all sinned, and our sins must bring us into judgment. But what has taken place? The blessed Lord Jesus Christ has gone to the cross, and borne our sins, and the judgment of God, in respect of sin that He may bring us to God, through the work that He alone could accomplish. It is wonderful news, that the "Son of Man came to seek, and to save, that which was lost."

You do not know how the Lord loves you, how He longs for you. He wants to save you this night; will you let Him? Will you have Him? He has come

to seek, and to save, that which was lost. If there be a lost soul here to-night, one consciously lost, you may have Him. But you say, How can I have Him? Let Zaccheus show you the way. It was in a very simple way that he came to Jesus. He was a rich man; chief among the publicans; a kind of commissioner of customs or of taxes. He was evidently a high-placed official, but the publicans, or tax-gatherers, were not loved in those days, nor are they loved in ours. This man desired to see Jesus. His riches did not satisfy him. He knew there was something wanting, something lacking. Jesus had passed that way before, but he had missed Him. Just before this, Jesus had opened the eyes of the blind man, and this rich man said in his heart, I would like to see Him. That is a striking word—"He sought to see Jesus, who he was" (Luke xix. 3). The man was in earnest. There is no doubt of that. Do you want to see Jesus? Jesus was the point of attraction for Zaccheus. It was Jesus whom he longed to behold. Say, have you beheld Him? You have heard plenty about Jesus; have you ever seen Him? Oh, no! you say, we cannot see Him now. If you had faith, faith in the blessed Son of God, He would become a reality to you. Faith sees Jesus; faith knows Jesus. There is nothing more real than this knowing Jesus. It is a far more real thing to know the Lord Jesus Christ, than to know anybody else in this world, and to know Him is eternal life.

Zaccheus wanted to see Jesus, "and could not for the press, because he was little of stature." Is that always the case? Invariably. The devil will always do his best to hinder a Christ-seeker. If any man says, I would like to be a Christian, I would like to

have Christ, I would like to know Christ, I would like to see Christ, what will be the effect? Why, the devil will put every possible obstacle in his way. Here it was "the press." What sort of press was it? It was a big crowd that day, and Zaccheus was a little man; and I have no doubt the devil suggested to him that a little man like he could never see over the heads of the big people; and if he had not been in downright earnest, he would have said, "Here are hundreds of people gathered, this is not the time to see Him, and I will wait another opportunity." But no, Zaccheus is in downright earnest, so he clears out of the crowd. He sees ahead a sycamore tree, and do you think the devil helped him to get up that sycamore tree that day? I do not think so. In his earnestness Zaccheus had said, I want Him; I must go to Jesus; I desire to see Jesus; and I will see Him, if I have to go up that sycamore tree to accomplish my wish. I think I can see Zaccheus. Then the devil comes along and says: "Zaccheus, if you go up that sycamore tree everybody will laugh at you. You know you are unpopular; you are a tax-gatherer, and it is a most odious tax you have to gather—the Roman tax. You had better not do it." "Never mind," says Zaccheus, "I am in earnest this time; I missed Him the last time. I will see Him this time." And what do I read now? "And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him" (ver. 4).

He cleared the difficulty, and got out of the crowd. I admire him! Look here, young man, what is your crowd—your difficulty? Your difficulty in becoming a Christian is this, "What would my fellows say? What would my classmates say, if I were to become a Christian? They would laugh at me." Never mind

that. When I was converted, my old companions had plenty of laughing at me; but I said to them, "My dear fellows, I have the best of it, depend upon it. I have Christ for time and eternity. I am safe for time and eternity. I am happy for time and eternity. You may laugh as you please, but, thank God, when you will be just finishing with the things of this world, and will have nothing but 'the wages of sin' for eternity, I shall be just beginning my joy." My dear friends, that is how the devil tries to hinder a man. Sometimes he says he would not hold out to the end; or, again, that he would not be able to stand against the mockery of his fellows; or, again, he suggests that he would be a contemptible fellow if he began to follow Christ, and did not hold out. In that way the devil seeks to hinder your blessing. Heed him not. My friend, you must get out from all this press; I implore you, break from the press. There is a man in this room who is anxious, but the devil says to him, "Your prospects would suffer, you must not be a Christian." I reply, "Better lose your prospects than lose your soul." "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark viii. 36, 37).

Well, Zaccheus got away from the press; he wriggled out of it. He got clear of the thing that entangled him. If there be a convicted sinner here, who wants Christ, I will tell you what that man will do. In his heart he will say in the presence of God, "I will get out of the crowd; I will get clean away from all that hinders me." Zaccheus was a man with downright earnestness about him. He ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Jesus. He

just cleared out of the press. Every soul really has to do similarly.

The night I was converted, there was an awful press on my soul; I will tell you what it was. It was just a week before Christmas, and I was engaged to go down from London to Devon, because I had to sing at a concert during the holidays. This was the point; I was pledged to sing the comic songs, and the devil said to me, "You cannot go and sing comic songs if you become a Christian." I thought it was rather indecorous, and I said to myself, "How can I decide for Christ, and then go and sing comic songs?" Then the devil suggested, that I should put off deciding to be a Christian for a fortnight, that I could well defer for that short time, could go and redeem my pledge, and then return to town and be a Christian. I can tell you that he pressed this procrastination strenuously. However, I am glad to say that I came to the Lord that night.

"And what did you do about the concert?" I hear some one saying. I wrote to the conductor saying that I was converted, and that if I came down to the concert, I must sing about Christ; and I was afraid that would damage the success of his concert. People asked why I was not at the concert, and the conductor let out that I had been converted, and then my old friends said that I was gone wrong in my head. But no, dear friends, the truth was that I had got right in my heart. I was not wrong in the head then, nor am I now, as I speak the truth in love to your souls, and say that I want you for Christ. I want every one here to-night, by the grace of God to say, I will be for Christ. You would never regret it. I have been seven-and-thirty

years on the road to glory now, and I have never repented of my decision for Christ for one solitary second. Repented it! Why, it is the grandest thing under the sun to be a Christian. If you are not a Christian, you may well be ashamed of yourself.

Now Zaccheus was in earnest, and would to God that you too were in earnest. I have no doubt that he got up into the tree with the thought in his heart, I hope nobody will see me. That is what our hearts say at the first, till we get into the enjoyment of the grace of Christ. Then, when the love of God is enjoyed, and His salvation known, we want to tell everybody about it. That is always the way. When a man really gets to know Christ as his Saviour, then he wants to let everybody know about it.

What happened next? When Jesus got to the spot, He looked up, and saw him. Zaccheus hoped nobody would see him. He sought to see Jesus, and as He moved along in the crowd his wish was gratified; he saw the Saviour. Happy man. At that moment Jesus "looked up, and saw him" (ver. 5). Ah! friend, He has His eye upon you also. Jesus saw him, and then said, "Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house" (Luke xix. 5). He knew what was in Zaccheus' heart. He knows what is in your heart; He knows exactly what you want, what you desire. He knows you want Him? Do you want to be His? Do you want to be washed in His blood? Then you will break through the press to get at Him.

"Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." That is a lovely word, "To-day!" Ah, friend, do not despise it. To-day! That is just now, where you sit at this moment,

and the blessed Saviour says to you, "To-day I must abide at thy house." He wants your heart for Himself. He wants your heart filled with the knowledge of His own grace, and calls to you to "make haste, and come down, for to-day I"—Jesus, the Saviour—"must abide at thy house." Is not that sweet? I, Jesus, the living, loving Saviour, must abide at thy house. What then did Zaccheus do? "And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully." Do not you put it off. Do not you delay till the morrow. Do not you say, I will think about it; I will give it my best consideration; I will ponder the matter carefully, I would like to be a Christian some day.

Stop, my friend, this will not suffice. The Lord says, To-day! If you put it off till another day your fate may be that of a lady, who had been prevailed upon to go to the theatre to hear a well-known preacher. The realities of eternity were brought before her soul, and she was deeply impressed, for her diary revealed that she meant to turn to the Lord. After relating that she had been to the theatre, hearing So-and-so preach, her diary of that day contained these words, "I am determined, this day twelvemonth, to give up the world, and yield up my heart to Christ, and become a Christian." But conscience was not satisfied with twelve months. The delay of twelve months for an immortal soul is a heavy risk, depend upon it. Underneath was written, "This day, six months, I am determined to give up the world and become Christ's, and yield my heart to Christ." Apparently her conscience would not give her peace, and a third time she recorded her decision. This time she wrote, "This day month I am determined to

give up the world, and give my heart to Christ." Her conscience was apparently dulled by the prospect of decision within thirty-one days, and she retired to bed. Next morning that lady was found dead in her bed. God says to you, dear friends, "To-day." Jesus says, "This day." "Make haste, and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house."

And what response did Zaccheus make? We read, "He made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully" (ver. 6). Blessed action. Blessed decision. "He received him joyfully."

And how may we receive Him? you ask. He is not here on earth as He was then, and we cannot receive Him in the same way as Zaccheus did. If you want to receive Him, the Word of God tells us the way: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John i. 12). The way we receive Jesus is by believing on His name. If you want to receive Him, He is willing to receive you. You believe on His name, and Christ is yours, and you are Christ's.

But the bough of a sycamore tree is too far away from Christ, and Zaccheus is bidden to come down. His heart is obedient to the call, and he comes down, and receives Him joyfully. The people murmured that He was gone to be the guest of a man that was a sinner. I would like you to take up this position of obedience to Him to-night, and what would be the result? You will hear. What is said here? "This day is salvation come to this house." The moment the will is bent to Jesus, the moment the sinner's heart is bowed at the Saviour's feet, then comes this word to the conscience, "This day is salvation come to this

house." It is a present salvation, because it is God's salvation wrapped up in the person of Jesus. This day is salvation come to this house. It is a present salvation; a perfect salvation; a personal salvation. It is a salvation wrapped up in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the moment you receive Jesus, you are a saved person. You have received God's salvation. What a treasure to have in a world of death. Death has dominion over the believer no longer.

The man who receives Jesus receives eternal life on the very spot where he is, and the Saviour whispers to him, "This day is salvation come," not coming. There are a great many people who say, Salvation is coming. I beg your pardon; salvation has come. I will tell you what is coming; judgment is coming. Salvation has come in the Person of Christ, and the man who receives Christ has salvation. Can anything be more simple? "This day is salvation come to this house." The heart that receives Jesus can sing, I have a Saviour. Do not be afraid to confess Him. The difficulty that many a soul has to contend with, is confessing that you have received Christ. You do not need to wait till to-morrow morning to confess Him. You have the feeling, that if you confess Him to-morrow, men will laugh at you. Never mind that; who cares for that? He is a poor weak sort of a man that cannot stand something for Christ's sake. He is a very poor fellow that cannot stand up for Christ, and take his stand for Jesus in this world. Mark, for your soul to simply say, I am on the Lord's side, is to find that the Lord will sustain you, and you will find He will help you. Is there such a young man in this room to-night? God be praised for every man who stands for Jesus, and may you be able to stand for

Jesus to-night. You will then find what Zaccheus found. The Saviour had found the sinner, and saved him. The sinner had received the Saviour joyfully. Each found just what he sought, and each had joy in the possession of the other. Have you sought and found the Saviour yet?

"If I could find the *oldest* heart,
That longest has withstood
The wooings of Almighty love,—
My Saviour could and would
Forgive the awful life of sin,
And take the aged offender in—
My Saviour could and would.

If I could find the *hardest* heart,
Receiving only good,
And yet returning only ill,—
My Saviour could and would,
With one sweet glance of patient love,
The hardened rebel's spirit move—
My Saviour could and would.

If I could find the *coldest* heart,
And in its coldest mood,
A stone beneath the brooding wings,—
My Saviour could and would
Put warmth into the icy thing,
And give it life and give it wing—
My Saviour could and would.

If dark despair had sealed the heart,
And like a sentry stood,
And cried, 'Life is impossible!'
My Saviour could and would—
He *could* give life, for He has died;
He *would* give life, though all denied—
My Saviour could and would.

My heart is charmed to sing this song;
And if perchance it should
Prove music to a hopeless one,
My Saviour could and would
That hopeless one this hour forgive,
If but God's message he believe—
My Saviour could and would."

CHAPTER IV.

A RULER'S DIFFICULTY; OR, NEW BIRTH, WHAT IS IT?

(JOHN iii. 1-21, vii. 50-52, xix. 39-42.)

THERE are three places in Scripture where we learn a little about this interesting man—Nicodemus. First in John, chap. iii., then in chap. vii., and after that again in the nineteenth chapter; and I believe you will find that in these three places we get illustrations of the true spiritual whereabouts of every person. Now I read the third chapter of John, as far as Nicodemus is concerned, as "midnight." The seventh was "twilight," and the nineteenth was "daylight."

Midnight is usually profoundly dark. That is where every man is who has not met Jesus. You are in midnight darkness, my friend, if still unconverted, and there you will be until you meet Him. And when you meet Him, I will tell you what will come after—a perfect flood of light. Light always comes from God, never from man. God is light. Then, you say, what about the "twilight"? In the seventh chapter of John you will find that Nicodemus puts in timidly—sideways—a word for Jesus. I know many people like that, who put in a little apologetic word for Jesus, who would not like to stand openly

out for Him. Nicodemus says: Do not you judge Him before you hear Him! Do not be too hard on Him. Are you in His train? the Pharisees ask. Ah! he would not say that exactly. But there came a moment when he saw the Son of Man hanging upon a tree, crowned with thorns, and with all the world against Him, and then he came forward boldly, saying, I am on His side now. I do not care what the world thinks, what the world says, or what the world does. I am on his side. It was "daylight" in his soul.

Joseph of Arimathæa came, you know, to Pilate, and asked to be allowed to take Jesus down from the cross, and then Nicodemus brought an hundred pounds of ointment to anoint Him with. He now saw the truth—who Jesus was. I wonder if you have ever seen who Jesus was? I wonder if there has ever been a desire in your heart to know Jesus? I cannot help thinking that you would not be here this evening if you had not. I do not think it was mere curiosity to hear me that brought you here to-night. I trust it was the desire in your hearts to know the Lord Jesus. That was what brought Nicodemus. He was brought into the presence of the Lord. It is quite true he came by night. He hoped nobody would see him. He is like all of us. We are all alike in this respect. Men are the greatest cowards about Christ you can possibly imagine. A man will go coolly up to the cannon's mouth, and run the risk of having his head blown off by the enemy's shot, yet he would tremble like an aspen leaf to own that he was a follower of Christ. A strange thing it is, but it just shows what a dire coward man is where Christ is concerned. It shows, too, where the sinner is.

This man came to Jesus by night. There is no

doubt he hoped nobody would see him. This is frequently the case, that when a man comes first to Jesus, he hopes nobody will know anything about it, but when he has found Him he wants everybody to know Him. That is what I find about everybody who has a sense of the forgiveness of the Lord, and is enjoying the blessing of His salvation. They then want everybody else to know it. Not to know about themselves, but to know Christ as their Saviour, and to learn like them to confide in Him. I am perfectly certain every Christian man here will back me up in this. There is not a man who has learned to know Jesus, to know Him as his Saviour, but wants every one else to know Him as such. That is the beauty of Christianity. See how wonderfully it opens and widens the heart. I would have you then get what I have got; because if you get it, you will be immensely richer, while I am none the poorer. On the contrary, I am much happier, because I have somebody else to enjoy Christ with. That is what Christianity does. You have such a treasure, such peace, and such joy in the knowledge of the Lord yourself, that you wish others to share these blessings. My dear fellows, I have tried both sides of the fence. Few of you were perhaps so careless and godless as I was; but I will tell you what God did. He picked me up and converted me, and has filled my heart with deepest joy, and now I would that you knew the joy the knowledge of this blessed Saviour imparts.

Before this knowledge and this joy can be known there must come the sense of need, and what I find in this chapter is this, that Nicodemus came to the Lord absolutely and profoundly ignorant as to the truth about himself. On previous occasions we have been

seeing that Christ was the truth, and the perfect expression of grace. Now we must learn from the Lord Jesus a little about ourselves. I find in the second chapter of John—part of which I read—that "many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did." Do you think that saved them? Never. I would not think much of the faith of a man that was only based upon the testimony of visible deeds or miracles. I would not give you any thanks, if you could fill this room with evidences of the truth of Christianity. It is only unbelief that looks for external buttresses, and evidences of Christianity. I do not want them. I want nothing but the revelation of God in His own Word. And, thank God, we have there all the truth. Do you mean to tell me that Christianity requires to be buttressed up by the evidences which a man's senses can furnish? If it wants such buttressing, the sooner it tumbles down the better! Here are God's own Word, God's own Son, and God's own Spirit! What more do you want? Thank God, we have His Word. And in that Word, we have the record of the Son of God coming in grace to earth. Further, in this book I find a sinner,—a religious man, no doubt, but unsaved,—a religious, respectable, decorous, and proper man, and a man well instructed in the Scriptures, but profoundly in the dark as to his own state and God's requirements,—in what I might call nature's blindness, for that was where he was,—coming to Jesus, just as Jesus says, "I cannot trust any man," for "Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men" (John ii. 24).

The great truth of the second and third of John is this—Jesus, so to speak, says, I cannot trust you; but

you will have to trust Me, or else you will perish. Well, you say, that is very despotic! Never mind. I like despotism when it comes from the heart of God. I like the sovereignty of God. Because, you see, you and I must be broken down; you and I must be brought down as sinners before God. We must know the truth from God, for if I have not got the truth from God, I have not got the truth at all. I listen to the testimony of absolute truth, and what it says to me is this: "Many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men; and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man." He knew well that the multitudes that followed His steps, and waited to be fed by His Almighty hand one day, would the next, in cold blood, prefer a murderer and robber to Him, would wickedly put a crown of thorns on His head, spit upon Him, smite Him with a rod, and send Him out to death.

Ah, but you say, these were the people of the first century. Do you think the people of the nineteenth century are any better? Let us see. Go to the corner of your street, and attempt to preach Christ. What will you find? You will find that most people do not want Christ. They do not like even to hear of Him. Preach Christ, however, and gather a crowd, and then policeman No. B246 comes and says, "You must not block up the thoroughfare; you must move on." All right. We are subject to authority, move on, go down three blocks, and there find a German band, with a couple of thousand people standing about the place. Does policeman No. B246 move them on? Ah, no. They get leave to stand. The world loves music;

it does not love Christ. That is it. Sinners love music, but not Christ.

The truth is, that every man has a nature that is opposed to, and unfit for God. So bitterly opposed is that nature to God, that it is "not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. viii. 7). Since in the very springs of your being you are opposed to God, it is manifest that you will not do for God. You must be new-born, every one of you. You cannot be reconstructed. You cannot be patched up. I know you go in for reformation; but it will not do. It is like painting up a rotten ship, putting in new rigging, and new masts, and sending it out to sea only to sink in the first storm. You must have an absolutely new nature, and you cannot get it from any one but from the blessed Son of God. Self-improvement is a huge delusion. Have I not come across my reformation friends? Lots of them. There are hosts of men who have tried to reform themselves. Did I not try it myself? Long did I try it, and what was the result? I got no better, so I gave it up as hopeless, and what did I then learn? That I was lost. And what then? I believe God caused me to pass through the new birth, and Jesus saved me. And that is what He will do for you to-night. He cannot trust you; you had better trust Him.

I know people like to think there is still some good in man before God. Some years ago I was preaching in this city, and at the close three young men came to me—University divinity students by the same token—and said, "We should like to have a little talk with you." "I am glad to meet you," I replied. "We have listened to your address, and we do not agree with it." "What is the matter with my discourse?" I

asked. "Well," they said, "you have not given man a leg to stand upon." "I could not," I replied, "because he has not got one." "You have declared man to be ruined, lost, and undone, needing a new birth, and that he has not a single good point about him to commend him to God." "It is quite true. The Word of God says so." "Ah, but," they said, "we cannot allow man to come to that level." "My dear fellows," I said, "the point is this, the Word of God says man is lost. What then is the good of your saying he is not? The Son of God says, 'Ye must be born again.' What is the use of your denying it?" "We admit that man is not what he ought to be. We admit the fall; but there is surely a good side to man. And what is wanted is to cultivate and develop that."

Such was their view, and I fear the belief of many, but the Lord Jesus settles that in this chapter, as He says to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Educate it. It is educated flesh. Refine it. It is refined flesh. Though I educate it and refine it to the very utmost, it is flesh after all. Flesh will not do for God. Flesh is not spirit. You may sublimate the flesh as you will, you will never distil spirit out of it. Do you understand? See that to improve the flesh is truly hopeless? Thank God that it is so. We are all in the same case. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 23), and that was what the religious Pharisee in the darkness of that night in Judea learned, and that he must be born again. You and I too—very likely not so religious as he—must be born again. I do not think your life or mine would bear comparison with that of Nicodemus. Come now, honestly, do you think so? Supposing for

argument's sake we could put a pane of glass in your breast, and so let all here see and know the secret sins of your life, that nobody knows but God, and many of which very likely you have forgotten, what would happen? I think I should see you making quickly for the door, for you would not care that the secret sins and deeds of your life should be known. If Nicodemus needed the new birth, how much more do you and I need it? Do I not know what students are? Of course I do. Was I not one myself? Aye, and I know the life of the average young man. There is a good lot of your life you would fain have concealed from man, and you would blush to the roots of your hair if it were exposed. It is sin. You have lived in sin. You have indulged in sin. You are a sinner. If you are ashamed that man should know it, how do you stand with God? You will not do for God. You must be new-born. That is the naked truth.

Now this "man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews," came to the Lord, feeling that all was not right. Religion without Christ can never make a man happy. A large percentage of so-called Christians have got just enough religion to make life miserable.. Do you understand what I mean? They have a name to live, must keep up an appearance, and they have not Christ to satisfy their hearts. They are professors without being possessors of the truth, and their inconsistency of life is what puts numbers of young fellows against the gospel. You must have Christ within your heart, or it is no good. Nevertheless, do not think for a moment that I am giving you a reason for remaining in unbelief, or that any inconsistency in another man can be an excuse for your unbelief.

I remember a brother of mine returning from America, where he had been nearly all his life. I was a boy when he left, and twenty-five years had rolled by. Before he returned I had been converted, and of course I began to speak to him about his soul, as he was still unconverted. After a little conversation, he turned to me and said, "Christians are so inconsistent with their profession that they stumble me." "I admit that," I replied; "but I would ask you, Is my inconsistency going to keep you out of hell?" "I would not think that for a moment," he had to confess. No, for the man who takes this ground I have a simple answer. It is this. You turn to the Lord, and be a consistent Christian. Do not suppose because you see a flaw in the life of somebody else that that will justify your unbelief. Quite possibly you may say, I know somebody who professed to be converted, and he fell away, hence I do not believe in conversion. Very likely. Did you ever see a bad bank-note, or a bad half-crown? Does that bad bank-note prove that all bank-notes are bad. You are not such a fool as to believe that. What does a bad bank-note prove? A bad bank-note proves that there are millions of good ones, or the forger would not have troubled to produce it. Similarly the devil produces counterfeits of the real article, called a Christian, and when you think that one inconsistent man proves that all are false, you are guilty of gross folly.

Let us grant that some poor fellow you know has stumbled and fallen. He may have been converted, but not walking near the Lord, Satan has tripped him up, and he has come down. You think he is not genuine. Let me tell you, that at bottom, that man is

perhaps much better than the man who has never come down. He will be a better man after he came down than before it. When the devil's maid-servant met Peter in the high priest's palace, she tripped him up, and he came down, and denied his Lord. He, no doubt, went out of that court feeling, It is all up with me; and everybody else might well have said, We shall never hear of Simon Peter again. But you hear of Simon Peter again—a great deal more. Three days after he met his Lord and Saviour in resurrection, and got the sweet sense of His forgiveness, and seven weeks afterwards we find him preaching on the day of Pentecost, when three thousand men and women were converted. I know what the devil said then: "I wish I had left him alone in the high priest's palace; the breaking of him has been the making of him." Peter had been picked up by the never-failing grace of the Lord. He never could have preached like that if he had never fallen. Satan often does the Lord's work without knowing it.

But now, what about you, my friend? Have you passed through the new birth? If you have never come to Jesus yet, come now. Nicodemus came by night; but he came to Jesus. Can this be said of you? He came and said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Jesus replied, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He has no eyes with which to discern God's things. "Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" A very foolish question, but it brought out a gracious answer.

"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." You say, I suppose, that was baptism. No, what did Nicodemus know about baptism? Baptism was not a Jewish rite. It is very simple. It is the Word of God, used by the Spirit of God.

Very frequently in Scripture water is the symbol of the Word of God. For example: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed" (Isa. xliv. 3). Again: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean . . . and a new spirit will I put within you" (Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27). Look at the thirteenth chapter of John, where Jesus washed the disciples' feet with water. Presently Judas goes out, and in the opening of the fifteenth chapter the Lord says, "Now ye are clean," not because I have washed your feet, but "through the word which I have spoken unto you." It is the water of the Word. Clearly, the apostle Paul speaks of it again, when he says, "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. v. 25, 26). Again we read, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures" (Jas. i. 18). Peter also says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. i. 23). It is the Word of God, applied by the Spirit of God to the soul. It is the Spirit of God, taking the Word of God, and using it in the conversion of the man. You will find it so in every case.

If you are acquainted with a Christian, one who is a downright, what I call a backbone Christian—for

there are Christians without backbone, they are not out and out—but if you are acquainted with a downright, out and out, backbone Christian, ask him, "How did you get converted?" and I am pretty sure what he will say. He will quote to you some bit of God's Word, and say that through it he was converted. It was a portion of God's Word struck me. It was the last verse in the Bible you would have expected to be the means of a man's conversion. It was this, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe, and tremble" (Jas. ii. 19). You say, There is no gospel in that. Not a bit. How then could that convert you? you ask. It simply showed me that I was the companion of devils. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe, and tremble," revealed to me that my faith and theirs was identical. They believed all I did, and I saw clearly that they were lost, they were damned. I knew I was going to be; and I am not ashamed to confess, I saw my company and fled. Do you say, "Coward!" I wish you had a little of my cowardice. I fled to Christ, and He saved me.

Do you dare the judgment of God? You say, I do not believe in it. You will be converted yet. Christ believed in it, and bore it that He might rescue me. The Word of God is very simple, and the truth plain. "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." Men do not believe in judgment. They will be converted yet. Scripture speaks plainly of "wrath to come." The Lord is coming. Judgment is coming. I hear the thunder roll of the judgment of God in the distance. You say, I do not hear it. Very likely;

there are too many of the devil's drums going to make you attentive to the distant sound of the judgment of God. It is coming nevertheless. God "hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he raised him from the dead" (Acts xvii. 31). Yes, that judgment day is coming. Thank God it is not come. It is yet the day of grace. Christ brings salvation, by preaching, the Word of God goes out, the Spirit of God applies it, and what is the result? The man that hears the Word of God is born again. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; but that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," said the Lord to Nicodemus (ver. 6). Have you been born of the Spirit yet? What do you mean? you say. Ah! the very fact that you have asked the question shows that you have not gone through it. The man who is born of the Spirit can say, "Thank God, I know what it is to be born of the Spirit," and he can very probably tell you the year, the week, the day, and even the hour when the change took place.

Without doubt the Lord's statement greatly puzzled Nicodemus. The necessity of new birth had never entered his soul before. Even then it would seem as if he had but half believed it. His face expressed his profound astonishment, and that led the Lord to say, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN" (ver. 7). This inexorable "must" applies to the whole world; to the highest and lowest, to peer and peasant, to prince and pauper, to old and young, rich and poor. The Lord Jesus addresses these words to this religious man, but they have a universal application to every soul. Have you weighed them?

The new birth is a real thing, and there will be soul exercise till the gospel is really known. Perhaps there is a young man here who says, I thought when a man became a Christian he got very happy. No, do not make any mistake about that. The first effect of the gospel upon a man is not to make him joyous, but serious. He faces God—he faces his sins—he faces the reality of God's judgment, and therefore the first effect of the gospel is to make a man grave. Afterwards it fills him with joy. When God's Spirit and Word first affect a man his conscience is awakened, and he becomes repentant and self-judged. Then he wakes up to the discovery of the goodness of God, and coming to the Saviour, gets forgiveness and pardon. Then joy and peace set in, and deepen as the years roll on. Of the seven-and-thirty years since I was converted this is the happiest of my life. Every year is better than the last, because there is more of Christ and of His grace in it. When first I began to think conscience was at work, and I saw my sin and unfitness for God. I was not happy until I got the sense—the Lord has forgiven me. That is the experience of every one that is born of the Spirit.

I pray you to carefully note what Christ says, "Ye must be born again!" You will say, How does it come about? God takes the most wonderful way of reaching the soul. Marvellously diverse is His acting, but it is always by the Word, perhaps heard years before, and lying, like seed, forgotten in the ground. I know of a man who was living at a place four miles from where I was born in Devonshire. When a lad of seventeen he went into Dartmouth parish church one Sunday, and the pious old minister

preached from that text, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha" —*i.e.*, "cursed when he comes" (1 Cor. xvi. 22). He passed out of the church, and God added another eighty-three years to his life. He lived to be a hundred, and was then in the backwoods of America, a very hale specimen of a man one hundred years old. He had felled a tree, and sat down in the heat of the day to rest, and eat his mid-day meal, and as he sat on a log he began to think, "I have had a long life, for I am a hundred years of age to-day." He then began to think of the past, and travelled back the eighty-three years to that church in Dartmouth, and suddenly remembered the text used by good John Flavel, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha"—cursed when He comes. Then the old man said: "I have not loved the Lord Jesus. I shall be cursed when He comes." He was a convicted sinner, and, thank God, became a converted man. God used that word, which had been buried for eighty-three years in his memory, as the means of his conversion. This is always God's way, for a man is ever born again by His Word and Spirit; but as to the when, and where, and how, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit," for God is sovereign.

Do you know how an infidel was once converted? God likes to convert infidels. He likes to convert those who have been defiantly shaking their fists in His face. Yes, instead of condemning such, He meets them, and forces them in grace to acknowledge Him. This is just what He wants to do with you. This

infidel was a jeering scoffer, who denied the existence of God. One Sunday he went out into his grounds to while his time, for Sunday is usually a dull miserable day for the godless man, and this infidel found it so. He went for a walk in his park, and in a field adjoining was his favourite cow. The beast, when she saw her master, marched toward him. His hand was resting on the pailing, and the beast came up and licked the back of his hand. And he was converted through that cow. How? Did the cow preach? Yes, the cow preached by touching his memory. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider" (Isa. i. 3). The ox brought to his memory that striking verse, which he had learned as a boy, and it went like an arrow to his conscience. "The Bible is true after all," he said to himself. "That beast knows me, and I do not know God." He was converted.

New birth and conversion are always by the Word of God—by some bit of it. You perhaps have been brought to the point of asking, How can this be? It is a grand thing when man asks, How can it be? I like when a man flings down his arguments, and begins to inquire. I never argue. Not even with the infidels? No, I would not waste my breath. Argument never converted a man yet, but Holy-Ghost-applied Scripture does. If I can only get a bit of Scripture in, it is like a sword, it goes through. If a bit of God's Word gets into your conscience, you will never get it out. It is like a two-edged sword. It is the sword of the Spirit, quick and powerful. I was talking to a man the other day, who said he did not believe it was the Word of God. When God applies it to him, it will cut him all to bits. You may say it has no edge. Let me try it

on you. It has no point, you say. If it transfixed you, you would know it had a point; because when the light of the Word of God goes through a man, it cuts him down, and he sees it is God's Word.

"How can these things be?" says Nicodemus, and Jesus tells him, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (vers. 14, 15). It is very simple. Jesus therein tells the story of His own death. Look at the two "musts" of this chapter. "Ye MUST be born again" (ver. 7), and, "Even so MUST the Son of Man be lifted up" (ver. 14). If you are to live, I must die, says Jesus. You MUST get life, and I MUST go into death to give you life. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." And who does "whosoever" mean? It means what the boy told the blind man, who inquired whom it meant, "You, and me, and everybody." That is what "whosoever" means. God opens the storehouses of His grace to "whosoever believes in him."

Will you believe in Him? I ask you, Will you believe in the Son of Man? I think you will feel an awful fool by-and-by, when the Lord has to say of you—There is a man who would not trust Me, there is a man who would not believe in Me. Note that Gods says that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Mark, it is an absolute present possession, the possession of faith. Eternal life is the gift of God. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but

have everlasting life" (ver. 16). Oh, that is a beautiful verse, the 16th verse of John iii. Look at it. It begins with God, and ends with life. You cannot get life save from God, but "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth* in him should not perish, but HAVE everlasting life." You may have it. I have it. You have in this verse God's side of the action, and man's side also. God's side, loving and giving; and on man's side—my, and your side—believing and having. Really, my dear fellows, the gospel is wonderfully simple. God, loving, and giving; and man, believing, and having. I believe His love, I believe His grace, I believe what He says, I believe on His Son, and what is the result? I get eternal life as His own free gift.

Nicodemus went away from Jesus with his difficulty partly solved; but I do not think he was very happy just then. I think his conscience told him, "I am all wrong, and I shall never be right until I believe in, and then stand up for Him." That is exactly the case with you, if you have not come *to* Christ, and come out *for* Christ too. You are all wrong, and my exhortation is, Let in the light, and do not be ashamed to confess the Lord Jesus. Nicodemus came boldly out for Christ, when he had been lifted up, and I hope that you will say, henceforth, "It has been midnight with me hitherto, but, thank God, it is daylight now, I believe in the Son of God, and I have got Christ as my Saviour." Many of us can say that to-night; will you not join us in the confession of His blessed name?

CHAPTER V.

A THIEF'S CONFESSION; OR, FAITH *versus* RATIONALISM.

(LUKE xxiii. 33-43.)

THERE is not a more striking instance of grace —the grace of Christ—in all Scripture, than that which is before us this evening, in the case of the dying robber. In all the pages of the Word of God you cannot find anything more touching, or more expressive, of the blessed grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, than the way in which He deals with this man; for every person must admit it was a desperate case. He was a pest on earth, and he certainly was not fit for heaven. His faults nailed him to the tree. He was a man whose history was of such a character, that he was going out of the world in ignominy and shame, a sinner in his sins, to meet God. He was within six hours of his death, and Christ met him, and saved him. Has He met you yet? Has He saved you yet? Perhaps—nobody knows—you may be within six hours of your death, my friend. Who can tell? I am not a prophet, but I am a physician, and I have in my day seen many a hale man, and known that he has been cut off in less than six hours. Ah, friend! if you have never met that robber's Saviour, if you have never met my Saviour, do not let the few minutes that we shall

spend together pass without your coming into contact with Him now.

There is no scene in the history of the world like that which is before us in Luke xxiii. There is a page in God's Word, and a page in the history of man's world, that stands alone, stands unique, because you have there the death of the only absolutely sinless, spotless, holy Man, by the side of two men who were sinners, and one of them becomes the companion of that sinless Man for eternity. The other got his chance, but missed it. Between these three seen here, each nailed to a cross, there is an immense difference. Of One I can say this—There was no sin in Him; although there was sin on Him. Then I come to the man who had no sin on him, though there was sin in him. And there was the third of these men, who had sin on him, and sin in him. So he died. Ah! do not you be the eternal companion of that third man, I implore you.

You may perhaps say, What do you mean? One of these three had no sin in Him, and yet had sin on Him, when He was nailed to that tree! Yes! that was Jesus. Perfect He was. He was the holy, spotless Man; and the charm of this scene is this, that the thief confesses not only his own guilt and his own sin, but he makes, if I may say so, a public confession of what his faith is in regard to Christ. "This man hath done nothing amiss" (ver. 41), was his true and blessed asseveration. That man reversed everybody's judgment; that man stood alone that day in his witness, and in his testimony, to Jesus. I did not read the whole of the chapter, but if you glance through what went before, you will find that everybody was against Christ,—Judas, Pilate, Herod,

priests, scribes, populace, everybody; there was nobody for Him. Not one solitary soul stood for Him in all that company that day. What a scene! Betrayed by a false friend, denied by true friends, and deserted by all His followers; with the chief priests, who instigated the populace to demand His death, against Him; the governor against Him; the king against Him; the world against Him; everybody against Him!

But, at length, there comes a moment when, at His side, a man—almost entering into the jaws of death—boldly says, He is the sinless, the spotless Man, I will cling to Him. Ah, friends! I do not say I envy the dying thief. I admire him; and, by-and-by in glory, if I can find him out, I shall grip his hand, and say, "Thank you, my brother, you cleared my Saviour's character in the day when everybody was against Him."

It was a wonderful scene. Look at it a little bit. You know the Lord had been brought before Pilate who got his chance of receiving Jesus that day, but missed it, like many a man now misses it. The people came up, complaining against the blessed Lord; and when they did so, three times over does Pilate say, "I find no fault in this man; I will therefore chastise him, and let him go." But the people would not let Him go. Urged on by the chief priests and religious elders, they cried, "Crucify him, crucify him." I do not doubt Pilate was anxious to let the Lord go; the more so as, when he is seated on the judgment-seat, he gets a warning from his wife, who says, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man" (Matt. xxvii. 19). But he did not heed that message; he allowed himself to be over-governed by the clamour of the

people. He was just going to let the Lord go, when those who knew his weak point cried out, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend." Do you know who Cæsar was? He was the Roman emperor. And who was Pilate? His delegate; and Pilate was dependent upon Cæsar; he was supported by the world. And I would like to say this to you, that just in the proportion that you are supported by the world, so are you afraid of it. Thresh that out, and see if it be not the truth. "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend," turned the scale for Pilate. Cæsar's friends must side with Cæsar, while Jesus' friends must side with Jesus. Everybody sided with Cæsar that day, and nobody sided with Jesus. Perhaps, you think, if I had been there, I would have sided with Jesus. Would you? Are you quite sure you have done it now, to-day? Do you think everybody who knows you intimately knows that you are on Jesus' side. I should be glad if I thought so. Cæsar's friends must side with Cæsar, and Jesus' friends must side with Jesus, now, as then. Whose side are you on?

We read that everybody was against Jesus, and, Pilate having condemned Him, He is carried away from that hall—I would not call it of judgment, but of misjudgment; because righteousness and judgment, mercy and truth, had parted company there, they did not kiss each other. They parted company, and He, who was the Truth, was led away to die; Simon, a Cyrenian, bearing His cross. And I do not doubt it was the cross which had been prepared for Barabbas, another robber. That man was condemned to death; his cross was ready; and when the jailers went down to the cell where he was confined, I have no doubt

Barabbas thought he was going to the gibbet; and when he got to the judgment-hall, found the populace a raging mass around the Man he had heard plenty about, and then heard the question put, "Whom will ye that I release unto you, Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?" As robber and Saviour stood side by side, I have not a bit of doubt what was in his mind. The question was put whether they would have Jesus or Barabbas, and I have no doubt Barabbas thought, "Why, of course there will be no doubt about that; they will choose Jesus, not a sinner like me; there will be no chance for a murderer like me. They will not let me go." I think that man was bewildered when he heard the cry go up, "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas" (ver. 18).

Christ is then led down from the hall, the cross is laid upon the Saviour's shoulders, and He goes out to die. Thank God, He did die; and He died for me, I know. I do not know if you know it yet, but He died for sinners. I do not think Barabbas knew what was wrapped up in that death. As He goes out, a number of women weep and bewail Him; but He turns to them, and says, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck" (vers. 28, 29). That is, there is a solemn day of retribution coming; do not suppose that God has forgotten the fact that His Son was murdered. Do you suppose that God forgets that His Son was in this scene, and that the world cast Him out? Has God forgotten that, do you think? No; though, in His patience, He has set His Son on His right hand, and said, "Sit thou at my right hand,

until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Ps. cx. 1), He is coming again. "Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom," was what the thief said; and come back He will. And so the Lord says, "In that day"—mark, their lips will utter a strange prayer—"they shall begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us" (ver. 31). You would scarcely believe that men would appeal to nature to hide them from God; but such will be the case, and what a revelation is this of man?

There are four prayers spoken of in this chapter. The prayer of hatred, "Crucify him" (ver. 21); the prayer of fear, "Mountains, fall on us" (ver. 30); the prayer of love, "Father, forgive them" (ver. 34); and the prayer of faith, "Lord, remember me" (ver. 42). The prayer of hatred has been answered. By-and-by there will come the prayer of fear, "Mountains, fall on us: hills, cover us" (*see* Rev. vi. 15-17). Anything to keep men out of the sight of God; anything under the sun to keep them out of the reach of God, and from the wrath of the Lamb. They will put anything in between themselves and God; but all in vain, for, says the Lord here, "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (ver. 31.) What do you understand by that? Who was the green tree? Why, Christ, of course. Sap, life, verdure, and fruit, all were seen in Him; and God, looking down from above, saw that one fruitful green tree, and—as He looked everywhere else—saw what? Dry trees! There are a good many such in this hall to-night, let me tell you. A dry tree is lifeless. Christ was the green tree, ever presenting that freshness and fruit which suit God.

And what do I take out of this figure for myself?

That by nature I am a dry tree, and so are you; there is no life in us. Sinners are the dry trees, and a dry tree makes good fuel. What do you mean? you ask. Well, thresh that out, my friends. A dry tree makes good fuel, and that is really what a man in his sins becomes if he go to the lake of fire. "What shall be done in the dry?" is a serious question indeed. I, says the Saviour, the green tree, am passing through all this,—what is to be the lot of the sinner? If the Holy One passed through God's judgment, because He was bearing the sins of others, what about the sinner in his sins? I appeal to you. If you are a sinner, you will have to meet God, and you will have to answer to God about your sins. Whatever you may be, whatever profession you may make, or do not make, you will have to meet the Lord by-and-by; and there is a solemn question here propounded by the Lord, "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" There was no answer that day; it will have to come.

And they drew Jesus out of the city. "And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him." These four words describe the most terrible scene enacted upon earth—"THERE THEY CRUCIFIED HIM." The place, a graveyard; the actors, the whole civilised world; the act, the cruelest and most shameful form of death; the victim, God's own beloved Son! The selected spot was a graveyard—Calvary, Golgotha, "the place of a skull." And why there? Had not Jesus talked about life? Had He not raised the dead? Had He not unstopped deaf ears, and given sight to the blind? Had He not done many

wonderful miracles? Had He not talked about the Lord of life coming from glory; and had He not spoken about being the Son of God? He had. And why did they take Him there? To insult Him in that graveyard. They use the signs of death on every hand to mock Him who was the Lord of life. They bring Him, who was "the resurrection and the life," to the scene where there is every evidence of death around Him, as much as to say, Let us see if you can avoid death. It was the most solemn mockery. They had crowned Him with thorns, and now they put Him to death.

But see what that death meant as viewed by God. It was this—that He who was Lord of life came into the scene of death that He might bring life to us. As regards the world, it was the violent effort to get rid of God and of His Son. And the world is unchanged to-day; "There they crucified him" is the declaration of what the world's estimate of Christ is. But, say people nowadays, we have got on a good bit since that day; you are a little bit antiquated in your notions, the world has changed very much since that day. Well, I admit that advance has been made in science; I admit a little advance has been made in art and knowledge too. I am not blind to the progress which has been made in those ways which contribute to men's comfort in this world; but tell me, Are they nearer God? That is the question. Are you nearer God? You know a little more about scientific things than you did some years ago, but are you nearer God? The world was not a baby when it murdered Jesus. It was a full-grown man, if I may say so, when the blessed Saviour was put upon the cross.

Over His head was a superscription, "THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS," written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, the three dominant languages of the earth. What, you ask me, do you mean by the world being a full-grown man? I reply, Whose books do the students of to-day read? Why, the books of the men who wrote in that age. Their teachers are careful to give them the books of the men of that day; we must turn to the Homers, and the Virgils, and to the philosophers of that age. It is a strange thing; but if I seek ornate sculpture, or marvellous buildings, I am sent back to these past ages to find them. If I talk about monuments, men turn me back to that age. It was the Augustan age of the world. No, no; the world was no babe, but full grown, in the day that it gladly yet calmly set that superscription there, in the three languages of Rome, Greece, and Judah. The religious Jew, the martial Roman, the learned Greek, all three combined, and said, We do not want Jesus; get rid of Him. That was why the crime of Jesus (which really was being just what He was) was written over His cross in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. United in evil, "there they crucified him." They gave this blessed One, who was the Son of God—yea, who was God incarnate—a felon's death, and a felon's cross; while by His side hung two malefactors, that the scripture might be fulfilled, "He was reckoned among the transgressors" (Luke xxii. 37).

What follows now? The Lord prays a remarkable prayer. There was the prayer of hatred, when the people cried, "Away with him." There is coming by-and-by the prayer of fear. But, mark, here is the prayer of love. I will come to the prayer of faith in

a minute or so, but here is the prayer of love, and what was it? "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (ver. 34). Go back to that scene in the memory of your heart for a moment. Do not forget it is the cross of Jesus. I would like to guide you to that scene on Calvary, and point out those three crosses. Look at the One in the middle, look at that blessed One, crowned with thorns, hanging on it, while the soldiers are gambling for His garments beneath His eyes, and His enemies are regaling themselves with the very sight of His death agony. Tell me, who is He on that tree? Over His head is written, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," in the plainest language. That was the full inscription clearly. What was His crime? I repeat, simply being what He was. And who was He? Jehovah, the Saviour, and the King of the Jews. And what was His crime? Not that He did anything wrong, but that He was what He was. And what was He? Jehovah, the Saviour, and the King of the Jews.

The Jews would not have Him, you say. I know that; they refused to have Him. There, however, was the truth; for, you recollect, another scripture tells us that when the chief priests came along they said to Pilate, "Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews" (John xix. 21). You know what Pilate replied, "What I have written I have written" (John xix. 22). Ah, Pilate knew he had written the truth that day; but He was more than the King of the Jews—He was Jehovah the Saviour! Mark, friend, He was not alone a holy, spotless Man; but that Man was the incarnate God—God manifest in the flesh, seen of angels, and preached to the world; but, alas! cast out by the world.

In another gospel we read, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John i. 14). Here then I find this Man, who was hung upon that tree, crowned with thorns, to be God. And, friends, you have to meet Him. Who hung on that tree? God! And you have to meet Him yet. Oh! you say, He was a man. I know it, and love to own it. And what kind of a man? The thief shall tell you presently. But, mark you, He who was there was God. I will tell you what it is; when the truth of that fact enters a man's soul, it becomes light. And that poor dying thief by His side got light. Whenever the thief got to know who was by his side, it was light in his soul, and it made a wonderful revolution in his history.

But listen to this prayer, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." His enemies have done their work,—and now see the perfection of Jesus, in grace. At the moment when His enemies have done their worst,—spit in His face, smitten Him with a rod, preferred a robber to Him, crowned Him with thorns, and nailed Him to a tree,—then was fulfilled the scripture, "He was numbered with the transgressors." Then, I suppose, there was a little hush in the crowd, and His voice was heard. Listen to it, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." It was the prayer of perfect love, and I have no doubt it was answered, in the second and third chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, when Peter came in the power of the Spirit, and preached so effectually. I do not doubt that then the intercessory prayer of the Saviour was blessedly answered. What I want you to notice here is the perfection of the love of the Saviour as He prays for His murderers, and this prayer goes up, "Father, forgive them; for they

know not what they do." I believe, as these words fell upon the ears of that dying thief, they came, if I may say so, as a flash of light to his soul, and he became conscious that the One beside him, on the cross, was closely linked with God. Whether he was clear that He was God, I do not say exactly; but manifestly at this moment he got the light that Jesus was the Son of God. That he learned from the words, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Amazing scene! The man who is dying in his sins, hears this sinless, spotless Man positively praying for His murderers! I believe that was the moment when the rays of blessed, divine light entered his soul, and the man became conscious that God's Son was being crucified by his side. Evidently there was some time for him and others to think, for "the people stood beholding" we read (Luke xxiii. 35).

Now mark what follows, and observe the contrast between the infidelity and rationalism of man's mind, and the simple faith of this dying thief. Look at the different classes of people who come out here, because what is before us in this scene is just a sample of what is all around us to-day. I am not surprised that there is infidelity and rationalism in the world to-day. You have the seed and germ of it all in the scene before us. "And the rulers also with them derided him, saying," tauntingly and jeeringly, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he be the Christ, the chosen of God." That little word "if" has the whole root of infidelity in it. Ah! my friends, you are here to-night with a good many "ifs" in your mind. You are in bad company. The rulers were doing terrible work that day; they were the leaders, and they headed a

countless host of unbelievers and doubters, stretching from their day to that in which you live. "He saved others." They did not doubt that; they could not deny it. They knew of many deeds of beneficence, and they gave witness to them. I mean to give witness to-night too. He has saved me—has He saved you? "He saved others; let him save himself, if he be the Christ, the chosen of God." Is He the chosen of your heart? That is the question now. God had chosen Him; but they did not believe Him.

How, they asked, if He be the "chosen of God," does it come about that He is crowned with thorns, and gibbeted with malefactors? "Let him save himself, *if* he be the Christ." Eternal damnation stalks behind that little word "if." The heart full of "ifs" is not full of faith. That "if" is a terrible word; there is want of faith in it. And there are many people who have a large number of "ifs" to answer for—they have really no faith. They are certain of nothing, except that they cannot be certain about anything. Thank God, there are no "ifs" in my faith; I am perfectly well aware by whom I am saved, and who He is, and what He is, and what He has done for me. Faith is the most positive thing in the world. Rationalism is just like a bat in the sunlight, and you know what the bat does then? The more light it gets, the more dumfoundered it becomes. You know the bat goes out in the dark; it can only flit easily about in the evening, when the light is gone, and that is where many are to-day. The bats of infidelity and rationalism are abroad in myriads, and everybody has got at some time into their company. I was among them at one time, but I did not like their company.

Let us go further. "And the soldiers also mocked

him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, *If* thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself." Again this awful *if*. They wanted Him to prove that He was the King of the Jews by saving Himself. But He would not do that; He would not save Himself, just that He might be able to save others like you and me. Unbelief doubted, faith accepted, then, as now, the superscription, "This is the King of the Jews."

"And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, *If* thou be Christ, save thyself and us." You would not have thought that the poor fellow would have talked in that strain; you would not have thought a man in his serious position, in the jaws of death as it were, would have railed in such a manner. Another scripture tells us that both the malefactors did it (Mark xv. 32). I do not doubt both of them were hardened enough to mock at the Saviour; they did not, you will notice, taunt each other; they both, however, twitted Christ. Why, there is not a man that does not hate Christ at the bottom of his heart to begin with. Even a dying robber, just going to drop into a lost eternity, will spend his last breath in abusing Christ. But note this, Christ will spend His last breath in praying for those who have abused Him. If sin leads a man to abuse Christ, He in the goodness of His heart, spends His last breath praying for His murderers; and I think that was what wrought the great change in the heart of one dying thief, while the other dying wretch, untouched by grace, and abiding in unbelief, says, "*If* thou be Christ, save thyself and us." There was, alas! no faith in him towards Christ.

At this moment a charming scene takes place, under the most difficult circumstances. When everything

was against Christ, and when there was every reason why he should not believe in Jesus, the other thief comes out in a magnificent way. It is quite evident that the Spirit of God works in him, as he is heard speaking to his neighbour. Three hours ago you might have heard him railing against the Saviour. But what has happened? Light has come into his heart. I would like you, my friend, to get light into your heart. I cannot give it to you; I can only say, that when light comes into a man's soul, he learns himself, and he learns to know God. If you do not know God, it is because you have not got light. He turns, and mark what he says: "But the other answering rebuked him" (ver. 40). It is not a godless man rebuking a godless man. No, it is a godly man now rebuking the godless. That man was converted, I have no doubt. Oh! you say, I do not believe in sudden conversion. I will tell you why; because you are not converted yourself. An unconverted man never believes in sudden conversion; and more, I never knew a converted man yet that was not converted suddenly. When light gets into a man's soul, he is a changed man *at once.* Here was this dying thief, who had been cursing and blaspheming the Saviour just a little while back, he hears the prayer of the Lord, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," and the man is changed — converted! Do not you tell me he was not converted then. If he was not converted then, he was never at any other time; but he went to Paradise that day, mark that! Be certain of this, that the prayer of Christ was light to his soul. He recognised that he had God's Son by his side, yea, before his eyes. Others may gibe and jeer, but he looks into the face of God

incarnate, into the face of Jesus, and sees grace, kindness, perfect love, and forgiveness there; and, as he listens to that prayer, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," a wonderful change takes place in him. The Holy Ghost works in him, and presently, when his neighbour again breaks out abusing Jesus, he turns and says, "Dost not thou fear God?" (ver. 40.) Ah! you say, what a pretty fellow to talk that way. My dear friend, it is the man that is converted who can talk; and the reason why you cannot talk, is because you are not converted. The moment you are converted, your lips will soon be urged to talk, and your feet to walk in the way of righteousness.

Take a good look at that thief! See the change in him. He is now bold for God, and fearless of man. "The wicked flee," says Scripture, "when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion" (Prov. xxviii. 1). And here is a man with that kind of character. Until now he was such a pest that his fellows had to get rid of him; but now, touched and changed by grace, he turns round and says to his neighbour, "Dost not thou fear God?" It is a fine thing when a man fears God. Perhaps you do not fear God. Well, I know what the Psalmist says of the man who does not. "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes" (Ps. xxxvi. 1). There was no fear of God in my heart for many a day, but at length, like this thief, I found out that it is a wonderfully blessed moment when a man begins to fear God. It is not cringing fear I mean, but the sense of what is due to God. "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments" (Ps. cxii. 1).

Do you know what is the fear of the Lord? I find it well described in a sevenfold way by the wisest man that ever lived—except Jesus—Solomon. He says, (1) "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;" and by way of antithesis he adds, "but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. i. 7). You know where you are, my friend; I do not know. But you know your company, and your companions will tell you where you are. I will read it again, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." Then, again, (2) "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil" (Prov. viii. 13). The thief was getting into his proper place, and approaching the beginning of knowledge, as he showed his hate of evil. I go a little further, and I find, (3) "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding" (Prov. ix. 10). The thief was set for this, and is getting on, you see. I go still a little further, (4) "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened" (Prov. x. 27). The two thieves illustrate that. One was cut off for ever, the other passed into eternal blessedness. Again I read, (5) "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death" (Prov. xiv. 27). The believing thief proved that also. And now I read, (6) "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom" (Prov. xv. 33). That the thief illustrates too, as he gives it to his neighbour. There is only one more, and it reads thus, (7) "The fear of the Lord tendeth to life; and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil" (Prov. xix. 23). That the thief fully entered into, as he passed that day into Paradise. I tell you what it is, it would be well for

you to get into the company of that thief who had the fear of the Lord.

"Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" was a wonderful query, coupled as it was with, "and we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds." What genuine repentance is there manifested! He took God's part against himself. You are a dying man, and I too, and we are justly punished. The man who is divinely converted always condemns himself. "We indeed justly" is the language of real repentance. When we are not right ourselves we never employ "we." We can then use the word "you." This man, divinely taught, says, "We indeed justly;" and then, conscious of the glory of the One who hung by his side, sinless but suffering, adds, "but this man hath done nothing amiss."

It was a very striking confession. The world heard it, God heard it, Satan heard it, and to-night you hear it. Do you think he was a fool or a wise man? Nay! he was a wise man; and the man who is not his companion is a fool. You say, That is bold. It is true; it is right. That man was right, and every man, who is unbelieving, is wrong. That repentant thief accepts the judgment of God upon him, condemns himself, and clears the character of Christ, when all had condemned Him. His life had been a sinful one, and he owns it, saying, I have sinned, and I am getting what I deserve; and then boldly confesses his faith in Jesus. "This man hath done nothing amiss," is his triumphant allegation. He says to his neighbour, so to speak, "YOU AND I NEVER DID A RIGHT THING, BUT HERE IS A MAN WHO NEVER DID A WRONG ONE. He is dying, but I am going to cleave to Him. I reverse the world's

verdict. Judge and jury, I reverse your verdict. You declared Him to be a 'malefactor' (John xviii. 30), you adjudged 'He is guilty of death' (Matt. xxvi. 66); I declare, This MAN HATH DONE NOTHING AMISS." Thank God for the bold, true, glorious confession of that dying malefactor on the cross beside Jesus.

That dying thief changed his company at that moment. He fell in line with God, and His servants, in rich appreciation of Christ. There was a moment when a strange man by the side of Jordan saw coming to him another Man, and from the Baptist's lips came the exclamation, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." It was Jesus; and, as John baptized Him, the heavens were opened, and another voice was heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17). On the mount of transfiguration, again, the heavens were opened, the Father declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." The thief heard Him, and confessed His worth. Even out of the mouths of His enemies the confession of His excellence was made. When the servants of the high priest were sent to take Him, they returned, saying, "Never man spake like this man!" And Pilate, three times, as we have seen, declared, "I find no fault in him." But "he, who knew no sin, was made sin for us." There was no sin in Him, and yet He was made sin for us. The fact was this—in the moment when the poor thief discovered the perfection of Jesus, his sins were shifted on to Jesus, and He bore them, and blotted them out.

I ask you, Is not the testimony of this recent convert beautiful? "This man hath done nothing amiss."

What think you of the testimony of the dying thief? He confesses his own sin, and judges it too, and at the same moment gets a glimpse of, and proclaims the glories of the Saviour's character, "This man hath done nothing amiss." Grand old thief! Ah! my friends, in the way of faith, there is nothing like this in the world's history. This man, in the very jaws of death himself, and when every possible evidence was against Christ, discovers His worth, and proclaims alike His excellences, His Lordship, and His Kingly rights, saying, as it were, I will guarantee His life, I will guarantee His character, I will guarantee His history, I will go bail for His perfection—He has done nothing amiss. He is Lord and King, and although He is dying now, He will rise and come in His kingdom. Splendid testimony of faith!

The next moment he says, "Lord, remember me when thou comest in (*not* into) thy kingdom." I know Thou art dying, but I know Thou art the King. Thou art going out of the scene, but Thou wilt come back again. Remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom. That is all the length his faith got then; but mark the Lord's answer, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Oh! look at the Saviour's grace to the man who confides in Him. That other thief, hand and glove with the world, was railing against Him—infidelity, rationalism, and reason were working in all save one, as they stood, or hung, taunting Him to save Himself, *if* He were the Christ, and *if* He were the King. The poor thief sees that He is a King; sees that He is the Christ the Son of God, and then owns that He is his Lord!

I verily believe that men nowadays have not a

thousandth part of the faith which that poor thief had. He trusted Jesus when every possible evidence why He should be trusted was gone. He was dying, refused of man, and forsaken of God, yet then it was the thief confided in Him. *We* have all the evidence about the Lord Jesus Christ—that He is risen from the dead, has passed into glory, and is thus accepted of God. This the Holy Ghost has come down to tell us, and we have, for the assurance of our faith, all that is given us in the Scriptures. The dying robber, touched by grace, and wrought on by the Holy Spirit, says, "Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom," at a moment when all this was unrevealed. Will you, my friend, trust that blessed Saviour, and give Him the confidence of your heart? Notice now the Lord's answer, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The dying believer got the assurance of present salvation. And observe this, ye who are fond of ritual, he was never baptized, and he never took the Lord's Supper either. And where did he go without either? To paradise that day. How do I know? Because Christ said he should, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." It was that day, not the day after, not to-morrow, but that day. Such is grace; and such the reward of faith.

Now see what follows immediately after this. The Lord Jesus was forsaken of God. You do not get that account in the Gospel by Luke, but we read that "it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour" (ver. 44). Up to this point you have the human side of the cross. From the sixth hour to the ninth hour there was darkness over the land, and in that darkness do you know

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what took place? The sun refused to yield his light that day—darkness shrouded the sun, while the Saviour was in that darkness taking up with God the whole question of man's sin. He had said to the thief, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," and here comes the moment when the Saviour bears sins, is made sin, suffered for sin, and died for sinners, so that, the work being completed, the thief can go there. The redemption work of Jesus is the ground and basis of all blessing on the one hand, while the work of the Holy Ghost in the soul of the thief is evident on the other, as he first trusted, and then boldly bore testimony to Christ. I do not know if there is a man here who would bear such a testimony. There, first of all, you see the work of the Spirit of God in him, and then you see the atonement, which the blessed Lord came to make, wrought and completed, so that he could be righteously saved. One scripture says, "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin;" while another says, "He came to bear the sins of many;" and yet another, "The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquities of us all." He bore in His body, at that moment, the sins of many, and, as the result of bearing the sins of many, He is forsaken of God, and then He cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

What a cry is that which comes from the dying Saviour! Listen to it. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" If you cannot give an answer, I can. He was forsaken, blessed be His name, that I might be accepted. And that is what every heart in this hall who knows Him says. He bore the judgment of my sin, because "he was made sin, who knew no sin." I said just now there was no sin *on* the thief, though there was sin *in* him. How is this? His sins were

laid on Christ; they were taken off the poor thief who trusted Him. I now see the poor thief's sins borne by the thief's substitute. Though that dying thief was, in himself, what he was, the atoning efficacy of the blood of Christ is laid to his credit, and the work of the Saviour, in atoning for that robber's sins, is effectual. "To-day," says Jesus, "thou shalt be with me in paradise." He gets the knowledge of his eternal safety. He is the first trophy of the Redeemer's sacrifice. The sins of the thief are laid upon the Saviour, and He atones for them, and for ever puts them away.

With what unspeakable interest did all heaven that day watch that scene, when heaven's Lord becomes man's Saviour, and dies! And who is the first trophy of redeeming grace? It is a poor dying thief—it is this poor robber. Oh! it was a wonderful scene, as heaven looked down upon that cross, and watched what the result would be. And when the Shepherd came home, what had he got? He had got the lost sheep truly on His shoulders, and He brought him in, the trophy of His victory. And now I ask, Are you not going to let that Saviour save you? He would not save Himself; but He saved the dying thief. And in grace I can say, He has saved me. Will you not trust Him? The dying thief trusted Him; I trust Him; and, oh! I implore you to trust Him. Take one look at that cross. See Jesus there for you. Well wrote the poet—

> "There, from His head, His hands, His feet,
> Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
> Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
> Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"

Did He die for me? Faith replies, He died for me. Sinner, He gave Himself for you. The poor thief as he prayed, "Remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom," thought of blessing in a far-distant day—for the Lord has not yet come in His kingdom; but perfect love replied, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

The first man turned out of an earthly paradise was a poor thief, his name was Adam; and the first man who enters the heavenly paradise through Jesus was a poor thief. Grace is a wonderful thing, and it was by God's sovereign grace that the robber was brought into paradise that day. He tasted it for a few hours on earth, and then unhinderedly for ever. I have tasted grace—will you not taste it? I implore you to receive that Saviour. Believe Him, and then go forth and confess Him.

CHAPTER VI.

GRACE—WHAT IS IT?

(JOHN i. 1-17.)

YOU will observe in the 17th verse that the Spirit of God says, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." On a previous evening we were occupied a little with Christ as the Truth. To-night I want to say a few words on Grace. Both came by Jesus Christ, and therefore I know not the truth, nor have tasted grace, nor have you, unless we have to do with Him. The question raised must be, "Have you had to do with Him?" You know not the truth, nor apprehend what grace is, unless you have.

"The law was given by Moses." And what did the law do? It convicted, and condemned man. That is all the law can do—convict a man, and condemn him. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," and grace is a wonderful thing. Would it not be a wonderful thing if grace picked you up, converted you, and turned you to know the living God, and made you a present and everlasting witness of God's goodness? That would be grace. It would not be a question of desert, because grace is always the activity of the love of God, when sin is present. The moment you hear of grace, you must recognise the fact of sin. I know people do not like to talk about sin, they do

not like to think about sin, and they do not like to admit sin. They try to deny it; but mark this—deny sin, and you shut out grace. The man who is not content to own himself to be what Scripture affirms about him, knows not what grace is.

You ask me, What is grace? I do not know that I can exactly explain it. I know it; I have tasted it; I have enjoyed it; and I wish you to enjoy it too. Grace is God's coming to a man that has sinned, and taking him out of the condition in which his sin has placed him, a condition out of which he cannot by any possibility extricate himself by his own efforts. Now I was saying once before to you that you could not say that God was the truth. God is true; but Christ is the Truth, because He is the perfect revelation and exhibition of what God is. I do not read in Scripture that "God is grace." I read that "God is love." That is what He always was, before man was on this scene at all, or before man fell. God is love. That is what He is in His eternal existence. And God is light. These are the two absolute terms by which God is described. Love is His absolute character of goodness. Light is more relative to evil. He cannot tolerate evil. After man sinned, what do I find? That God stepped into the scene where man had sinned. Grace is the love of God putting on a new colour, and a new character, entering the scene where man has sinned, and entering for the purpose of blessing the man, who, by his sin, had put up a barrier between himself and God.

Now there is no good blinking the matter. You and I are both sinners. You may deny sin, but you cannot deny its consequences. The Word of God says, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death

by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. v. 12). Elsewhere we read, "The wages"—the consequences—"of sin is death" (Rom. vi. 23). You cannot deny death. It is all round about you; and I will tell you more, it is the thing you least like. There is nothing a man dislikes so much as the thought of death. It is a strange thing. You never saw a dog afraid of death. I have seen hundreds of men afraid of it. No beast, no animal, is afraid of death. The only creature that is afraid of death is man; and why? Because man has a conscience, and has a deep inherent consciousness that there is something after death. Said a wretched man lately, "If it was not for what comes after death I would have committed suicide surely." Scripture tells us what it is, "But after this the judgment" (Heb. ix. 27). Yes! God must deal with sin. He must judge sin, and we have all sinned. The Holy Ghost has said, in the plainest possible language, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 23). That takes you and me in.

But you may ask, What is sin? Scripture does not leave us without a definition of what sin is. "Sin is lawlessness" (1 John iii. 4, R.V.)—that is, the creature doing his own will. Now, I think I cannot go beyond the truth in saying that every one of us likes our own way. There is not a man in this audience but likes his own way. The Spirit of God in describing our condition, says in the Old Testament, "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned *every one* to his own way" (Isa. liii. 6). One man takes his way—it is the wine-cup, and shameless orgies; another, the race-course, and dissolute company; another, the card-table, and the gambling-hell; and another, the

billiard-room, and its concomitant waste of time and money. Sin may take any shape you like. It may take the shape of what men would term "innocent pleasures," but which they would not care should come out in the light of day. The point is this, you and I like our own way. I acknowledge it. I liked my own way, ay, and I took it too. What happened? I am thankful to God for it, He stopped me. How did He stop me? He stopped me by the revelation to my heart of what His grace was—the grace that came by Jesus Christ.

"The law was given by Moses." It came, and made claims upon us. It made claims for the right reason that the law is a revelation of what the creature ought to be. As I gaze on the ten commandments I see what I ought to be. My conscience tells me that I am not it. Consequently I am condemned by the law. It naturally condemns me whenever I learn its spirit and its power. But what does the gospel do? It brings the revelation of what God is, not what man ought to be. The chapter we are looking at tells beautifully how God has come into this scene in the Person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It says, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." And who is that Word? The opening verse tells us, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." I want you to look at this, "In the beginning was the Word." Then the next thing is, that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." By "the Word" what am I to understand? The Eternal Word of God! It is Jesus —the Son of God entering into this scene and becoming a man. Men have said, "God was made flesh."

Scripture does not say so. It says the "Word was made flesh;" and the reason is very simple. If I think of God as given to me in the Bible, I have presented to me the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. If I say "God was made flesh," then I should not express the truth, because the Father was never incarnate, and the Spirit of God was never incarnate; but the Son of God, the Word, "became flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth" (ver. 14). The Eternal Son has come into this scene, humbling Himself, and becoming a man, in order that, in the form of a man, He might reveal to us the heart and nature of God; and moreover, that God, in the condition in which He was found as a man, might find all He looked for in man. That is the charm of these beautiful words, "full of grace and truth." The law Moses might bring, but "grace and truth" came only by the Son of God.

Now I admit that the truth will convict a man. The first effect of truth on a man is to trouble him. I do not think the first effect of the gospel will be to make a man happy. Oh! you say, I thought the gospel would make him happy. Nay! The first effect of the truth is to make a man serious before God, in the conscious sense, I am a sinner; I am an undone sinner. I will tell you more—If you ask any one who is in this hall to-night, who is a converted man, how he got on at first, what his experience was, he will tell you, that while the gospel is now filling his soul with joy and gladness, yet when the truth first met him, it did not make him happy, but made him serious and thoughtful. Why? Because the truth that he was a guilty undone sinner entered his soul like a red-hot iron.

Truth, then, will convict a man. When I am convicted by truth, what is the next thing? Grace wins me. Grace attracts me, and I turn to Him, in whose presence I find myself to be a poor, ruined, good-for-nothing sinner. I turn to Him, and learn that I am unfit for God. I learn also in that blessed Man, who is the image of God, and the eternal Son of God, in His life and death, what grace is—grace personified. I learn how the love of God can go out after a good-for-nothing, ungrateful, sinful, and self-willed man, until it has overtaken him, and poured blessing into his soul. Many a man in this audience to-night can tell you the same thing. I was pursuing a course of self-will until arrested. My friend, you must be arrested sooner or later. The day of your arrest is at hand. Sooner or later! Infinitely better is it to be arrested in this moment, when grace is active, when God in grace is blessing man,—when God in grace is coming out to meet us, than be arrested by-and-by in your sins, when righteousness can only condemn you. Now God, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, comes to meet us in grace, with a view to our present and eternal blessing.

Grace, then, is the activity of the love of God to us, after we have sinned, and before the day when He deals with our sins as the righteous, moral governor of the universe, because God must judge sin. He would not be God if He did not judge sin; He would be no better than us if He did not judge sin. I know perfectly well that men try to get rid of the judgment of God; but the truth is this, God judges sin, and must do so, because He is God, and is infinitely holy. But what has He already done? After you and I have sinned, and before the day of judgment, when

He must deal with men about their sins, He has stepped into this scene, in the Person of His own beloved Son. Grace has come in, and what do I find? That the very One, who is going to be judge by-and-by, anticipates the day of judgment, enters into the scene, dies in the room of guilty man, bears his judgment, and delivers him, not only from the consequences of his sin, but brings him into the enjoyment of the love of God, makes him a child of God, and makes him the happy possessor of the forgiveness of sins, and of eternal life.

That is what Christ does. That is love. What was He in Himself? He was the expression of perfect grace. Track Him where you will, during His lifetime on earth, and you will find nothing but grace. Ah, but you say, He exposed the hypocrites. Yes, He did. Do you think Christ would do anything else? It was absolute grace that exposed hollowness. Do you think it would be gracious of me, if I knew you were thoroughly false, not to tell you? No. It was so with Christ. It was His grace that exposed those who came near Him. It was righteousness also; but Christ was the Truth, and the Light, and nobody who came into contact with Him could fail of being exposed. That is why men do not like Him, and will not come to Him, because, if they come to Him, their true condition is necessarily made manifest to themselves, and that they dislike.

After the truth convicts us, grace meets us perfectly. Have you ever tasted that the Lord is gracious? The Lord is abundantly gracious. Take any illustration you please from the history of His pathway through the world. Look how His grace went forth to that poor guilty woman caught in an act of the most heinous

sin (John viii. 2-11). The law could only condemn her, and her crime should be visited with death. You know what took place? The scribes and Pharisees brought the woman, taken in adultery, to Jesus, and said, "Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned; but what sayest thou?" They sought to put Him on the horns of a dilemma. That was their wickedness. They thought to have occasion to accuse Him. If He said, "Let her go," He would be acting in defiance of the law of Moses; while if He said, "Stone her," they would have turned on Him, and asked Him what had now become of His doctrine of grace, for He was dealing in judgment. Jesus was the light, and He said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast the stone at her." You know what took place. They all went out. The light drove them all out, and the woman was left all alone with Jesus. "Woman," He asks, "where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more."

That was grace. Christ was acting on the ground of that which He Himself was going to accomplish; He anticipated the atoning effect of His death. Grace can only be active now, save on the ground of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. The wages of sin is death, and just because of what He is, God must judge sin. There was nothing binding on Christ, save His purpose to glorify God; but, in grace, He took the place He did, and He who knew no sin, became sin for us, and the Just died for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. The spotless One took the sinner's guilt, and died in the room and stead of the poor sinner. What then? God raised Him from the dead,

and in another part of Scripture that speaks of grace —where the Spirit of God, by the pen of Paul, is unveiling the way in which God now justifies, and saves men—I read this: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. v. 20, 21).

Now observe this, grace came in the Person of Christ; and as the consequence of His death what do I find now? I find grace is reigning. Who is on the throne to-day? Christ. By-and-by He will be the judge. The day of judgment has not come yet. Who is on the throne to-day? If I may use the figure—Grace. The apostle is careful in this same chapter to point out that sin and death have reigned. Death and sin reigned, and I might add another—Satan. There was a fearful triumvirate of evil reigning—Satan, sin, and death—up to the coming of Jesus. What since then? They have been deposed. Grace has entered the scene, and now reigns "through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Is sin abounding? Who will deny it? Has it not abounded in your history and mine? How blessed then to know that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

I heard lately how grace abounded in a remarkable case. It was the custom of a certain family to meet all together about Christmas time. It happened one year that the meeting took place in the house of the eldest son Henry, who at the time was an infidel. When the whole family had gathered there, the old grey-haired father, who was a pious man, as he sat at his son's board, returned thanks for the meal they

were about to partake of. The son angrily said to his father: "You have no right to say that in my house; you have no right to give God thanks. I bought that food, every bit of it; and I will not have you thanking God for what I bought and paid for. There is no God. I don't believe there is any God at all. Look here! If there is a God I'll give Him a chance. I will give Him five minutes to cut me down." He took out his watch, and put it on the table. The whole family sat aghast. They knew what God could do, but would He? was the question. Is there an atheist here to-night? My friend, yours is a poor creed. One minute went by, two, three, four, and five, and the defier of God was not cut down. "There," said he, "where is your God? He has had His chance, and lost it." "Ah, my son," said the old man, "when you put the watch on the table, I began to pray to the Lord for you. When you were a child I gave you to God, my son, and I have never taken you back. I believe God will save you yet, my lad."

The meeting broke up, and very soon after the old father died. Is your father dead, and gone to heaven? Then you had better follow him. Henry took his own way. He knew better than his father. Most young men think so; and he went into courses of evil and sin. He became a frequenter of public-houses. You often find infidelity and atheism are joined with dissipation and debauchery. After fifteen years he was seen walking in the street with tattered garb. He had his last shilling in his pocket. "What shall I do with it?" he thought. "I will have two glasses of whisky, and carry home a bottle of beer with me." He turned to go to the nearest gin palace, but when he was quite near it the recollection of the family

scene struck him, and an arrow of conviction from heaven entered his soul. He exclaimed, "O, Spirit of God, have mercy upon me, and answer my dear old father's prayer!" He did not go into the public-house. He went back to his house and wife, and got down on his knees before God, and cried for mercy. God answered his dear old father's prayers, and blessed him. He was saved. That was grace! That is like God.

Oh, you say, I expected you would tell us he was cut down. That is what you or I would have done. That is the way of man. But God did not cut him down. He spared him, and then saved him. Grace so wins its proudest victories over its foes. Ah, the grace of God would like to save you this evening. It has saved me. It has saved many who are in this meeting to-night. It can save you. Did you ever hear that remarkable expression, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared"? (Tit. ii. 11.) Righteousness will bring judgment by-and-by. Grace brings salvation just now. "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Mark, it is grace—sovereign grace. I hear a man say, "Surely to get salvation I must labour for it. Are there not some works to be done?" I have often heard a man say, "I will turn over a new leaf." It is easy, if you have been careless, and heedless of the things of the Lord in the past, to say you will turn over a new leaf for the future. But observe, though you turn over a new leaf it is still the old book. What about those old pages blotted with the sins of bygone years? Blotting no more will not erase the

existing blots. You do not want reformation, you need reconstruction. You need exactly what the apostle gives you here, "Grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." It is a new life communicated, given—not some patching up of the old life. You have to learn that "eternal life is the gift of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. vi. 23).

But, again, I hear some one say, "Must not I do something towards salvation?" Well, I will read to you a scripture from the fourth of Romans: "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 3-5). That is a very remarkable scripture, is it not? I will read it to you again. "To him that *worketh not*, but *believeth* on him that justifieth the ungodly, *his faith* is counted for righteousness." If I pay a man a professional visit, I do not think it an act of grace that he should pay a fee. It is a question of righteousness. If a man does a week's work for me, it is no act of grace on my part if I pay what is the proper amount for the week's work. I am in the labourer's debt until it be paid. How was Abraham justified? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." It was faith on Abraham's part, and grace on God's. But carefully note, "Now to him *that worketh* is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." I hear some one say, "I thought God would justify the

godly." No, He justifies the ungodly, in absolute grace, on the ground of righteousness, *i.e.*, the atoning work of His Son. It is only God that can do this. It is His own work, and He rejoices in it. I know perfectly well the thought usually comes into a man's mind that he must do something—he must work. Profound mistake.

I was very much struck lately with a passage in the eleventh of Romans: "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more of grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Rom. xi. 5, 6). How then am I saved? By pure sovereign grace. So wrote the apostle Paul to the Ephesians: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: *not of works*, lest any man should boast" (Eph. ii. 8, 9). It is the blessed, precious, sovereign grace that has come to all of us in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. What we need, as sinners, is salvation. That salvation the grace of God has brought to us. If grace then has brought salvation, what have I now to do? I have to avail myself of that which God brings to me in the Person, and through the work, of the Lord Jesus Christ,—in plain language, I have to accept, by faith, the eternal salvation which grace brings to me.

The death of the Saviour is the only foundation and basis of acceptance of every one before God, because, in the cross, we have God's judgment of sin, executed on His sinless Son. There I see Him, who knew no sin, made sin for us. There I find that, "all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to

his own way: and *the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*" The cross is God's righteous way of delivering our souls out of the difficulty and danger into which sin had plunged us. The cross, whereon Jesus died, is the expression of the love of God, as well as the demonstration of the fact that "God is light." If, without bringing in the cross, He had condemned man, where were His love? And if He had passed and glossed over sin, without judging it, where were His holiness? The cross of Christ meets both difficulties. It is a great thing to see that the truth of Christianity rests upon two solid pillars, love and light, *i.e.*, what God is in His own nature. He must judge sin; but, to save the sinner, He has given His own Son as the expression of His love, to bear his sins, and to die in the room of those upon whom the sentence of death and judgment rested. The whole superstructure of revelation rests upon these eternal buttresses of truth. Light displays man's sin, and love removes it. Man had sinned, and was going on to the righteous judgment of God; but God steps in, and gives His Son, who becomes a man, that He may be enabled to die as the substitute, and in the room of guilty man.

We have God demonstrating His love, in giving His Son, and manifesting His righteousness and holiness, in that His Son, when bearing sins, and made sin, was judged on the cross. Christ owned and felt the weight of that terrible load of sin, as, on the tree, He says, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" As the righteous consequence of that atoning work wrought by Jesus, God declares that whoever believes on Him receives eternal life. That man has the gift of God. That man receives forgiveness of sins. That man gets salvation. That man gets pardon, and the

blessing of the Lord. If you want an illustration, just look at the dying thief. That man got salvation. "Lord," he says, "remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." You know what Jesus said, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." He was saved by the sovereign grace of God. Light entered his soul, and he trusted Jesus, and deep joy must have filled it as he heard where he was to go that day, and in what company.

But whom was Jesus dying for? For sinners, therefore He died for me. Do not you believe that He died for you? If you have been ashamed to confess Him hitherto, my friend, away with that cowardice. Ashamed of Jesus! Ashamed to confess Him! God forbid! Oh, may you have grace to believe in Him, and confess Him too. If you believe in His vicarious death for you, you will get what I have got—eternal life, through His precious name. You and I die because we are sinners. He became a man, that He might die, and meet the claims of God. As man, triumphant over sin, death, the grave, and Satan's power, He is sitting there in glory, as a living Saviour, and He says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved."

Grace wins wonderful victories — victories over sinners like you and me. Those victories consist of winning careless hearts, turning them to Christ, who in His grace blesses, and saves us. Well do I remember how God won one of your fellow-students once. I do not think his match is in this hall to-night. I knew him during all his course at Edinburgh University. He was the finest cricketer of his day, and the best football player in the University, and had a cupboard full of prizes. He was foremost in

his classes, and everywhere else, and became resident physician in the Royal Infirmary. He was the son of a widow, a fine handsome fellow, and a general favourite. I had often spoken to him about his soul. He did not much like it, but when he was sick he would always send for me. It was a curious thing that, though he did not want me to talk to him about his soul, he sent for me when sick. I recollect perfectly well one Saturday night getting a little pencilled note from him, "Will you come up to see me in the Infirmary? I am very ill." He had been playing football, and in a tremendous mêlée had fallen and injured his knee. Plucky fellow that he was he attempted to carry on the game, but fell down in a dead faint. He was brought up to the old Infirmary, where he was still a resident physician, and had been three weeks ill before I knew of his accident. When I got to him that Saturday night, I found him in bed suffering from one of the worst attacks of rheumatic fever I ever saw. Two nurses were with him, one during the night, and the other by day, busily employed mopping the perspiration that formed on his brow.

He had lost all power to turn himself, except the moving of his head, and knew very well that eternity was in the distance. I was very sorry to find him in such a condition, and asked him what I could do for him. "I want you to write to my mother," then living in the West Indies. He gave me certain instructions, and then I said, "And may I tell her that you have found the Lord?" "I wish I could say that, I would give all the world, if I had it, to find Him; but I fear it's too late now." I assured him that was a mistake, and then he said, "But it would be a shabby thing to

come to Jesus now, after neglecting Him so long." "Never mind," I said, "He will bless you, and save you now, if you will believe Him." I put the gospel before him, and left, with further instructions, to tell his mother that he was now "anxious to be saved."

One Sunday, four weeks later, I got a message again asking me to come. I went up, and saw plainly enough that death had marked him as its victim. The dew of death was on his brow. I sat down by the dear fellow's bedside. He was truly anxious to be saved, and I went over the story of the prodigal son with him, the history of the dying thief, and then quoted, "THIS IS A FAITHFUL SAYING, AND WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTATION, THAT CHRIST JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS, OF WHOM I AM CHIEF" (1 Tim. i. 16). Presently, when I had stopped, I saw his lips moving, and I knew he was praying. It is a wonderful moment when a man prays—when God can say, "Behold, he prayeth." At length he said: "My life has been a mis-spent life, but I believe Him now, I can trust Him now. I see it all."

I spent that night with him. To his nurse he said: "I was not too great a sinner for Jesus to save. I am dying, and I am not afraid to die. I am dying happy." To me he once said, "Do you think He will let me slip at the last?" "Oh, no!" I said, "it is not like Him. Do you think He would care for you, and die for you, love you, and then drop you at the last? Hear his own words, 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I GIVE UNTO THEM ETERNAL LIFE; AND THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH, NEITHER SHALL ANY PLUCK THEM OUT OF MY HAND'" (John x. 27-29). "Comfort my mother·

tell her I am going to be with Christ," fell from his lips, and his last words were, "IF I DIE, ALL IS WELL."

That was sovereign grace, was it not? Thank God! it was grace. That same grace will save you to-night, if you have never tasted it before.

"The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" Will you trust Him now? I think some of you will. If so, we might well sing that hymn—

"Jesus, I will trust Thee, trust Thee with my soul;
Guilty, lost, and helpless, Thou can'st make me whole.
There is none in heaven or on earth like Thee;
Thou hast died for sinners—therefore, Lord, for me.

Jesus, I may trust Thee, name of matchless worth,
Spoken by the angel at Thy wondrous birth;
Written, and for ever, on Thy cross of shame,
Sinners, read and worship, trusting in that name.

Jesus, I must trust Thee, pondering Thy ways,
Full of love and mercy all Thy earthly days;
Sinners gathered round Thee, lepers sought Thy face—
None too vile or loathsome for a Saviour's grace.

Jesus, I can trust Thee, trust Thy written word,
Though Thy voice of pity I have never heard:
When Thy Spirit teacheth, to my taste how sweet—
Only may I hearken, sitting at Thy feet.

Jesus, I do trust Thee, trust without a doubt:
'Whosoever cometh, Thou wilt not cast out.'
Faithful is Thy promise, precious is Thy blood—
These my soul's salvation, Thou my Saviour God!"

CHAPTER VII.

A Chancellor of the Exchequer's Dilemma; or, The Value of Scripture.

(Acts viii. 26-40.)

THERE is a peculiar charm about the story of this eunuch, and for this reason. The most cursory glance will give every person to understand how particularly deep is the interest of God in the man thus seeking light. Now, there is not the shadow of a doubt about it, that the man who is to be the subject of the remarks I have to make this evening, was a man in downright, deep-seated earnestness in his desire to get what he felt he needed. He had not the knowledge of God. No man would journey a thousand miles under a burning sun for a mere foible, and this man had certainly taken a journey of that length—if not greater. He was returning, not, however, having found what he wanted.

I believe, without any doubt whatever, that the eunuch was an anxious, awakened, inquiring soul, seeking light, and when he returned from Jerusalem, whither he had gone up "to worship," clearly he had not got it. And, further, I am certain, that the man was in a great dilemma. "I thought," we can hear him saying, "that when I went to Jerusalem, I should find the light as to the true and living God. I have

been there, and yet I have not got it." Somehow he had possessed himself of a copy of the Scriptures. Happy man! And he read them. Wise man! I wonder if you, my friend, have a copy of the Scriptures. Yes, oh, yes! Then do you read them? It is an immense thing to read the Scriptures.

I frequently come across people who have difficulties about the Scriptures, but these people are generally those, I find, who do not read them. I tell you that, because there are many such young men here, to-night. Nowadays, the learned and critical would-be friend of the young man says, The Bible is not for you to read, young man; there are so many difficulties in it, so many inconsistencies, so many flaws, and so many mistakes. Indeed! Well, I have been reading the Scriptures now for longer than many of you here have years. For seven-and-thirty years I have been studying them, and I have not found any of the discrepancies that the learned man has found out. But I found out, when I began to read the Scriptures, that I was a great blockhead at understanding them. I was little able to understand them, for I was rather like the man in this incident, I could not understand them till a teacher came along. But, as I have gone on reverently reading, I will tell you what has happened. I have found that God has given me what He gave that man. He gave light, and the Scriptures were made plain. What used to be difficulties to me, I find now, to be exceedingly important, and exceedingly instructive; and that, what were apparently inconsistencies, really constituted some of the brightest gems of revelation that lie scattered, from the first of Genesis, to the last of Revelation, all along the page of inspiration.

No, depend upon this, God loves us a great deal too well to put into our hands a book that cannot be trusted. I say this soberly, and seriously, and I have no hesitation in saying—spite of the infidelity of the day—that I believe that the Scriptures are the Word of God, from cover to cover. And, in spite of all that is said against it, the more I study the Bible, the more do I find out its unity, its completeness, its reliability, its absolute impregnability against all the attacks of the enemy; and that it is the revelation of God to my soul. I have found light, and always increasing light, through the Scriptures. And to you I commend them most earnestly and fervently.

One reason, why I am pretty sure that this man was marked for blessing, is that he had got hold of a copy of the Scriptures, and though he did not get much light from them, he was reading them most attentively. We have the Scripture in our day, but shall I be charging you wrongly if I were to say to you, that you do not read them much? Now, you just learn a lesson from this man, I pray you.

One great charm of the passage before us is this—I see that God has His eye upon an anxious man; and He will, in a certain sense, interrupt the blessed work of His grace elsewhere—at least through a special channel—in order to meet that anxious man. My friend, you do not know how God loves you; it is not till your heart is awakened that you really know the deep interest that God has in the salvation of man. What could be more lovely than God's interest in this anxious soul. See what He does; He calls Philip away from his remarkable evangelistic work in Samaria, and sends him down into the desert to meet this man. That is God; it is not the only time He

has done so. He has repeated this over and over again, but this is just a sample of the deep delight which God shows when He bends His eye upon the earth and sees the sinner groping after light, the sinner who will put himself to great labour and cost to obtain the light.

Let us look for a moment at Philip, and see what he was about at this time. Our narrative occurs just after the tremendous persecution, following upon the death of Stephen, who was rejected, and sent to heaven with a message from the Jewish nation to their King. Without doubt Stephen was the messenger who carried up that remarkable message of which the Lord speaks in the nineteenth of Luke. "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return . . . but his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke xix. 12-14). Jesus had come to His own (the Jews) full of grace, but they refused Him, and cast Him out. Not content with that, when the Holy Ghost came down, they refused the further message of grace, which was unfolded in Acts ii., iii. by Peter; and afterwards referred to by Stephen, in chapters vi., vii., where he narrates the guilt of the nation, and charges them with their sin. While "they gnashed on him with their teeth," he lifted up his eyes, saw the heavens opened, and "the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." In plain language, he beheld the glory-crowned Saviour. The Man whom they refused, and put to death, he saw crowned in glory, at the right hand of God. When he said that, they could stand it no longer. "They cast him out of the city, and stoned him" (Acts vii. 58). They sent him after the Saviour, whom they had

crucified, with the message, "We will not have this man to reign over us."

That was the end of the dispensation of God to the Jews. Though guilty of the murder of their Messiah, grace yet lingered over them, till Stephen's death completed the breach between the nation and God. You will remember that our Lord Jesus Christ, after He rose from the dead, commanded His apostles "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke xxiv. 47). Further, He said, "And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8). But why begin at Jerusalem first? Because God always begins with the worst spot, and the worst man in this hall to-night will, most likely, be the one who will be saved to-night. Jesus said to them, Begin at the spot where My blood was shed; where they clamoured for My death: preach forgiveness there, and then go to Samaria, and after that to the uttermost parts of the earth.

In fulfilment of this command, then, we find that Philip has gone down to Samaria. The gospel began to be preached in Jerusalem; but the Jew would not have it. The Holy Ghost's testimony was refused, and Stephen was sent up with the message, We do not want Jesus at all. Then the Spirit of God works in the widening circle, and down goes Philip to Samaria. He is elsewhere called "Philip the evangelist" (Acts xxi. 8), but he was not an evangelist to begin with. His was a case of a man faithful to his trust, and then developing the gift God gave him. Philip was one of seven men set apart to look after the treasury and the poor (see Acts vi. 1-6). That is what you would call

a deacon. He was appointed to look after the money, and to see to the poor; but after Stephen's death "there was a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem: and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. . . . Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts viii. 1-4).

Philip finding himself at Samaria, sees he has nothing to do as a deacon, and thinks, I can tell the people about Jesus; and we read of him that he "preached Christ unto them" (Acts viii. 5). Mark that! It is very instructive. It was not the first time Samaria had heard the gospel. You remember, that one day the blessed Lord sat by the well of Sychar, weary, and out came a wretched sinner, a woman, with an empty heart, and an empty water jug—figurative of her condition. She met Jesus; and He began to speak to her, in the fulness of His grace, about "the gift of God," "living water," and "eternal life" (see John iv. 1-42). At length, in the conversation, He touched her conscience, as He said, "Go, call thy husband, and come hither." Come back to Me. She answered, "I have no husband." Oh! no, said the Lord, I know it, you are living in open sin. "Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband." Go, and call your husband, and come back to Me; come back to the Light. Light was beginning to work in her soul.

A little more conversation followed, and then you recollect she took refuge in ignorance, and that is what many a soul delights to do to-day. "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is

come, he will tell us all things" (John iv. 25). "Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee, am he" (ver. 26). It is very noticeable that there are only two people to whom the Lord in His travels through this earthly scene made a revelation—a positive declaration of Himself. One was this outcast sinner of John iv., the other the outcast saint of the ninth of John. The blind man is cast out, and Jesus asks him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered, and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee." It is not a bad thing to be an outcast: that is my experience. I know something about it. And what do you find when outcast? That you are in Christ's company, and cannot get along without Him.

The Lord reveals Himself to this woman, and she at once goes into the city and says to the people, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John iv. 29). She was not afraid of Him. No, His grace won her heart. And was not she a sinner? I do not think there is one here worse morally than that woman. There is perhaps no person here to-night but fancies she was infinitely worse than they are, and yet this woman trusted Christ, and she went and said to everybody who knew her, "Come, see a man, that told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" And the Samaritans came out of the city, and got the Lord to go into it, and abide for two days. And then, you remember, they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the

Christ, the Saviour of the world" (John iv. 42). There was a good deal of work done in Samaria then, and it did not stop when Jesus left. It went on, and in Acts viii. I find the illustration of the words used by the Saviour in John iv., "One soweth, and another reapeth" (ver. 37). Philip, coming down into Samaria with the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, reaps, for we read, "And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake" (Acts viii. 6). There must have been a marvellous work. People nowadays do not believe in conversion; but when I come to Scripture I find a whole city moved. And Samaria was no small city, though not perhaps as large as the town you and I dwell in.

Well, the evangelist came down and preached Christ. Why Christ? for you will see presently that he preached Jesus to the eunuch. Why Christ? Because He was the ascended One. The Samaritans were to know that the One whom the Jew had refused—the Jesus whom they had once had in their midst—was now the exalted One at the right hand of God. Philip preached Christ, and what was the result? "There was great joy in that city" (ver. 8). It was a charming scene. I do not know what you feel, but if there be a place you can point out to me as the spot where God is blessing the preaching of His Word to the saving of souls—that place has a great attraction for me. Here, then, you see the work of God going on. Philip, used of God, preaches Christ, and Christ is being believed on, with the result that there is "great joy" in the city. I will ask you, my friend, have you found great joy from the preaching of Christ? I do not say, Have you ever heard the

gospel? as who has not heard the gospel over and over again; but I will ask you, Has it produced great joy in your heart? May it do so to-night, if never before, as it did in the city of Samaria, with its populous multitudes, and in the solitary desert with its single anxious soul. Whether it be Christ proclaimed, or Jesus unfolded, the result of the tale, in either case, was joy.

And now, we read, "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert" (ver. 26). Observe that it was the angel of the Lord. Presently when he comes within sight of the eunuch the Spirit speaks. The reason is this—the angel, in Scripture, is often used in the way of providence to direct people to the light, whereas the Spirit deals always with the soul. I will quote a scripture to you on this point. Perhaps you do not believe in the ministry of angels. Do you not? I do. "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. i. 13, 14.)

I think the angel who was sent forth to minister to this eunuch would indeed be a happy angel, because he was sent forth to be a ministering spirit to an heir of salvation. That angel had the sense that he had a most important commission, as he came to Philip and bade him take that journey, and carry to that man the news that he was one of the "heirs of salvation." Are you, my friend, an heir of salvation? You say, How can I tell? I think if you were in earnest you could tell. Am I an heir of salvation? I would

not dream of speaking to you to-night if I were not sure I was an heir of salvation.

The angel of the Lord tells the evangelist to leave his blessed work in Samaria and "go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert" (ver. 26). The journey was between fifty and sixty miles, and Philip might naturally think that nobody would be there. There were two roads he might have gone by, but Philip took the right road. When God sends a messenger to meet an anxious soul you may depend upon it He will see to it that His servant takes the right road. Here I see Philip took the right road. Perhaps you do not believe in the guidance of God in these minutiæ. Well, you have only to read Scripture, and you will see how He leads His servants to meet an anxious soul. Let us follow this obedient servant.

"And he arose and went" (ver. 27). That is a lesson for every Christian. There is no hesitation in Philip's mind. The only business of the servant is to obey. When I have been preaching the Word in a certain town, people have often said, "You will come again?" "I do not know." "But surely you will come again?" "I do not know." "Why?" "I will wait till the bell rings," said I. "What do you mean?" A true servant does not move of his own free will, so to speak, he waits till the bell rings. The bell rings here, and the man of God, the servant who is called, is ready. The command is, You leave all this wonderful preaching and conversion in the city of Samaria, and go down to the desert. The desert! Reason may have said, Why, there is nobody to preach to there; there is nothing to be seen in the desert. What does Philip

do? "He arose and went." He obeyed. That is the point. He was a good servant, an obedient servant, and thus was fitted to meet His Master's mind. God had His eye upon an anxious, light-seeking man, and He had an obedient servant ready to carry the light to him.

"And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet" (vers. 27, 28).

Some people would tell me he was not her Chancellor of the Exchequer. Well, I am not very careful about the label put upon him, but here I read, he "had the charge of all her treasure." He was a man thoroughly trusted, with an immense amount of money going through his hands. He had evidently a high place in the confidence of his royal mistress; but, notwithstanding all that, there was a want in his heart. This man, we find, had gone up to Jerusalem to worship. No doubt he was a Jewish proselyte. That is to say, he had heard of Judaism, had heard of the law, and that the land of Israel was the spot where God was to be worshipped. Seeking after God, he had taken this thousand-mile journey from beyond the southernmost confines of Egypt — how long he took the scripture does not tell us—but he reached Jerusalem. There was where he expected to find light, and to find God. What did he find? What many people find in Christendom to-day—ritualism, formalism, sacramentalism, but not the light of God. No, he did not get that. I do not doubt he found the temple full, and the priests

sacrificing. But what had taken place? Why, the One who was Himself the antitype of every sacrifice had been there, but had been rejected! The temple was turned into a den of thieves, and the very house of the Lord had become a house of merchandise. The Lord Himself had been rejected; and I think I can see that Ethiopian looking for the manifestation of the presence of God, but seeing nothing but plenty of form, and plenty of ceremony. Of life—life according to God—he saw nothing. There was moral and spiritual death everywhere.

After a little he turned to go down to his house—disappointed—yes, I am free to say, in a perfect dilemma. "What shall I do now?" he thinks. "I have left the land of heathen darkness, to go to a place where I expected there would have been light, but there is none." What had taken place? He, who was the light, was rejected. You recollect Jesus said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John viii. 12). He also said, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John ix. 5). When the eunuch reached Jerusalem, the light of the world was not there; He had been transferred to heavenly glory. There was no light in Jerusalem. There was plenty of form, plenty of ceremony, plenty of ritual; but the whole thing was empty profession; and this poor man, disappointed, and in a deep dilemma as to where the truth and the light of God were to be found, turned his steps homewards, not having gained one single bit by going to Jerusalem! Dear man! what he really wanted, was not Jerusalem, but Jesus. That is what you want too, my anxious friend. What does Jerusalem represent? What I

find people in great numbers believe in to-day—religious forms, and observances. Stop a bit, though. Have you Jesus? Do you know Jesus? The eunuch knew not where to find Him. He may possibly have heard of the death of the Lord. He may have heard how He was refused by the people. He may also have heard of Stephen's death. These things I cannot say. He makes himself, however, the possessor of a portion of Scripture, and with this priceless treasure in his possession, though he did not yet know its value, he takes his way home.

We find him in his chariot, reading the prophet Esaias; and, depend upon it, now as then, if you can only find a man that has got hold of the Scriptures, and is reading them, you will notice that God will send some Philip to that man's side, sooner or later. Yes, if you are in downright earnest to get the truth, you will get it. This man was in earnest in seeking for light, and the knowledge of God. God saw this, and prepared the way for his receiving what he sought. Do you say this is a strange case? I could tell you of numberless cases such as that. Let me tell you one.

Not very long ago, one Monday morning, there was a telegraphist at work in the west of England. The young man was in very deep anxiety about his soul. He had been awakened by God's Spirit, and he was an anxious, troubled man. He knew he was not right. He longed to have Christ. On the Lord's Day previous he had gone to three separate places of worship, in deep desire that he might get something for his troubled soul. He got nothing. Monday morning came, after he had spent a sleepless night in anxiety about his soul, and he went to his duties.

Feeling that he would go mad if he did not get relief and forgiveness, he was in the act of prayer to God when he heard the peculiar tick-tick that let him know his station was called for. He went to his instrument, took out his pencil, and wrote down the name and address of the sender of the message, and then the name and address of the addressee. Then came the message, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29). "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. i. 7). Repeating the message, he cried, "Thank God, I am saved: I have got it: I see it!" And he said, telling a friend of mine afterwards, "That 'LAMB OF GOD,' that 'REDEMPTION,' that 'BLOOD,' that 'RICHES OF HIS GRACE,' went right down into my poor heart, and no one in the whole world could have had greater joy than I had that Monday morning."

God caused that telegram to be the means of bringing peace to that young man. What did he do then? He wanted to see to whom the telegram was sent, and so, instead of giving it to the telegraph boy to deliver, he went himself with it, so that he might see who was the recipient of the message. He carried the telegram to a house not far off, and to the young girl who opened the door he said he had a telegram for So-and-so. "Ah! that's for me," said the girl. She read it, and she found peace also. Asked the meaning of the telegram, she said that she had been anxious about her soul for a fortnight. Her master was not a Christian, but his brother, who was a decided Christian, had been staying at the house for some time. Through his reading of the Scriptures with the family in the

mornings and evenings, the servant girl became quite anxious. In her distress of soul on Sunday afternoon, she made bold to write to her master's brother, telling him that she was very anxious about her soul, and begging him to kindly write, and tell her what to do to be saved. The Christian man sent the telegram instead of writing. Why? Because God wanted to give the young man peace. God is good; God is love; God is light; and God loves to bless you. He delights in blessing. That was a strange case, you say; I do not think it was any stranger than the eunuch's.

"Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot" (ver. 29). It is a very nice thing when the Spirit guides you to the right person. He always does direct us to the right person, if only we are subject, and ready, like Philip, to go at the Lord's bidding. Well, he goes near, and as he runs along by the side of the chariot he heard the traveller read. "Go near." God does not say, Go into the chariot. Oh, no! God says, "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." I see the evangelist; he runs along, and gets up to the chariot. The man in the chariot is deeply interested, and as Philip is running along he hears him reading. What was he reading? "The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth" (Acts viii. 32, 33; Isa. liii. 7, 8). As he reads, all of a sudden he is startled by a voice, which he had never heard before, asking, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" (ver. 30.) His

answer was very simple, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" He owns his ignorance, and then he does another thing, "he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him" (ver. 31). I should like if you would invite me to come that I might speak to you; do not you do it, if you do not mean it. If you do not want Christ, do not ask me; nothing gives me greater pleasure than to get a letter saying, "May I have half an hour with you? May I I see you?"

But this man "desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him." He was in earnest. If he had not been in earnest, do you know what he would have said? He would have replied, "What business have you got to put such questions to me?" That is the sort of answer you get from careless people, when you ask them about Christ. They say, "What right have you got to speak to me about these matters? I keep these things to myself." I will tell you why, my friend. Because you have not got very much to keep. I find that the people who, as soon as you draw near them, button up their coats tight, so to speak, do so because there is not very much inside. If there was much inside, it would burst out. You will always find, in the person who has received the truth of the grace of the Lord, that his heart expands to others. That was just so in the instance of the telegraph clerk; the man got blessing himself as the telegram passed his way, and he wished to communicate it to others.

I do not ask you to request me to have a talk with you; but take this advice from a saved man: If you are not saved, let me implore you, get a downright, red-hot Christian, that is the kind of Christian to get, and set him down beside you. Will you do it? Oh!

you say, I do not think I would like that. Ah! then you are not very keen. Take a lesson from the keenness of this man; he takes a thousand miles' journey to get the truth, and is willing to take up beside him this unknown man, if only he be able to open the Scriptures to him.

Well, Philip, I read, goes up, takes his place by his side, and then the passage of Scripture was discussed. It was a remarkable one, in the fifty-third of Isaiah, a part of Scripture which describes the terrible rejection of Jesus by the Jew. "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth." You have only to go back to the gospel history to see the fulfilment of the prophecy. When Jesus was taken before Pilate, He answered nothing before His judges. "In his humiliation his judgment was taken away." He was dealt with most unrighteously. "And who shall declare his generation?" Everybody refused him. "For his life is taken from the earth."

The eunuch does not understand the scripture, and now he says, "I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." It was a lovely start he got—I mean, a beautiful starting-point for the evangelist. The scripture points to the very moment when the Lord, dying on the cross, was bearing the curse and sin of man upon Him. Beginning at that scripture, he "preached unto him Jesus." I have no doubt he carried on the story down through other scriptures; for I am sure of this, there is nothing helps a man to understand Scripture like other scriptures. It is all the Word of God, and you

cannot give too much value to the Word. It is all sacred, and if you have to deal with doubting souls, let them have nothing but Scripture, and plenty of it.

He "began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." Why Jesus? Why not Christ? He brings before him all the personal grace of Him who bears that name. Jesus means, Jehovah the Saviour; and what a wonderful awakening it was for that heathen proselyte. He had gone to Jerusalem to find light, and the knowledge of God, but he found nothing there but formalism and ritualism. They had not satisfied his heart. But now Philip tells him of Jesus, the Son of God, who came to earth to suffer and die for sinners, and who, before His birth, was named Jesus—"Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Philip unfolds to him how Jesus came into this world that He might save man. He opens up the Scriptures, and preaches unto him Jesus. It is a charming name, the name of Jesus! Has it sounded sweetly in your heart yet? Oh! that name of Jesus; think of the grace of His life, His holy, spotless, sinless life! Think of what His death was; think of how He gave Himself in love for you, for me!

He told him of Jesus—Jesus the Saviour. Friend, I want to tell you of Jesus; it is Jesus you need, and Jesus that wants you, and Jesus who alone can save you. Jesus was the answer to the deep dilemma of the eunuch's heart. That is to say, he had not found anything in Jerusalem, and he could not understand the Scriptures; but he has here unfolded to him the story of the birth, the life, the death, the resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus; his eyes are opened, and light gets into his soul. He begins to understand the

truth. All he sought, he found wrapped up in the person of Jesus. Oh! the blessed name, the charming name—Jesus! Is it attractive to your heart? Do you love the name of Jesus? Is His name precious to your heart? If you are a Christian, the name of Jesus is very precious to you. If you are not one of the Lord's children, you know very little about Him. I ask you this, however, What are you going to do with this mighty Saviour? Are you going to bow to Jesus? Are you going to render your heart up to Jesus? There is a day coming when you will be glad to render up your heart to Him. I ask you to receive Him to-night, for you cannot tell what is to be the next thing in your soul's history.

Christ is worth knowing as your Saviour; and I am sure if you had met that eunuch a little later, a few miles down that sandy road, and asked him about Jesus, he would have told you a marvellous tale of the joy the knowledge of that Saviour gave him. As they went on their way, I have no doubt Philip told the eunuch much about the death and ascension of Jesus, as well as the atonement that He had made; how He had met the needs of man as well as all the claims of God; how He had destroyed Satan's power, and put away sin; and how the grave had been opened, and the stone rolled away, not to let Jesus out, but to let you and me look in to see there the proof and trophy of His victory. The folded grave-clothes tell us that He annulled death. That, and much more, would Philip tell him. Presently they come to "a certain water," and what does the man say? I do not read that Philip said anything about baptism, but the eunuch says, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Now, what

did he mean by this? He had heard of the life and death of the Lord, and he learned that Jesus had gone into the grave and risen again. He seems to say, "He came into this scene for me, and has died out of it; and now I should like to identify myself with Him, even if it be only in the figure of baptism. In this water I would like to put on His name." That is what the eunuch practically said, as he enlisted on the side of the rejected Jesus. So to speak, he took the shilling in his chariot, and he donned the red coat, and went at once on the parade-ground, as he was baptized. He took up this position,—I would like to be stamped from this hour forward as a man who has got the name of the Lord Jesus upon him. That was the meaning of his being baptized. The eunuch took the name of Christ upon him, and he carried the Word into his own country.

It is not said that Philip told him to be baptized. No; but the man's heart was right, and he easily learned the truth. As they came up out of the water, we read that "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip." No doubt this was a miraculous intervention of God; and mark, it was not only the eunuch who saw it. That man was not driving his own chariot that day; somebody else was driving it. He had a good equipage, and I expect there were a good many servants looking on. It is a fine thing when the master takes a stand for Christ; you will generally find that then a blessing comes to the servants as well.

And what is recorded next? "The eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing." I can say honestly, that I have gone on my way rejoicing for thirty-seven years now since the Lord saved

me; and if you receive the Lord to-night, you can go on rejoicing as well. You get into your soul the sense —the Lord has loved me, and saved me by the value of His atoning work. If you do that, and believe God's Word, then you may go on your way rejoicing. Let me say this, a Christian is a man who really is entitled to be happy. I know people say to me, Christianity is a dull thing. Dull! why you never made a greater mistake! I remember a fashionable young lady coming to me and telling me she wanted to come to Christ. I met her some days afterwards, and I put it to her, "Have you come to Christ?" She looked the reverse of happy. "I am trying to give up the world," said she. "Just that," I said, "you have not come to Christ." "Well," she said, "I have made a sort of profession of Christ, but I am not happy." That is not it at all. If you yield your whole heart to Christ, and believe the gospel, then you may go on your way rejoicing, as well as the eunuch or the man who addresses you, because every Christian knows he is saved through the blood of his Saviour, and hence is entitled to rejoice in the Lord.

The truth is, that Christ has died, and risen again for us, and the Christian lives in the ascended Saviour. What gives a person joy and peace? Looking at Christ, feeding on Christ, and dwelling in Christ. There is nothing more blessed than to be a downright —what I call a backbone Christian. Do you understand me? I said to a young medical student to-day, "My dear fellow, you have no backbone in you." And he said, "I quite feel that you are right, doctor; there is no earnestness, no go about me." A man without backbone, you know, is a helpless sort of

article. There is no fervour, no rigidity, no energy about him. What is wanted is the spirit which says, Let me know what I have to face, and by grace I will face it.

Now if you are converted, young man, hoist your colours. You say it was all very well for the eunuch, no one saw him. I do not agree with you there; I am sure a good many people looked on, and, what is more, he became the carrier of the gospel to his own country—for that it got in, there is no mistake. Would it not be a happy thing, my friend, if you were to take the gospel where you live? Let me encourage you. You make up your mind to believe this night; trust the Lord Jesus, and confess Him. Remember, "that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. x. 10). If you were to do that, you would go on your way rejoicing.

This chancellor's dilemma is over. Jerusalem yielded him nothing save the Scriptures. From them he hears of Jesus, believes Him, confesses Him, and witnesses for Him, and then goes on his way rejoicing. God give you, my friend, to do exactly the same.

CHAPTER VIII.

ETERNAL LIFE—HOW TO GET IT.

(JOHN v. 20-47.)

NOTICE the words of the Lord, at the close of this chapter, where He says: "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" We live in a day when people think that what Moses wrote is not to be received. There are doubts about his words. I just want to say to you, before we go into the subject before my mind to-night, that the Lord Jesus Christ puts His stamp upon the writings of Moses, as He says: "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me." Observe, He distinctly says, Moses wrote of Him. Do not you tell me that Moses did not write that which bears his name, for then Christ was wrong in saying he did? I do not think the Lord Jesus was wrong. Ah no! And He says, Moses wrote of Him. I say this, because we live in a day when so much doubt exists as to the authenticity of Scripture, and many young men are caught in this snare of Satan. It will be a good thing for you if you get your doubts dispelled. Our Lord says, authoritatively: "Moses

wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (vers. 46, 47). Are we to credit Christ, or not?

Now the point I would fain press on you this evening is the value of the word of the Lord Jesus Christ. I think it is important to notice these words of Christ. "If ye believe not his (Moses') writings, how shall ye believe my words?" Do you believe the writings of Moses? You reply, I have my doubts. Thank God, I have not. I am very sure that the Lord Jesus, the Eternal Truth, the Son of the Father, knew exactly what He was saying when He so distinctly stated,—that the writings of Moses bore witness to Himself. Moses was a witness, a distinct witness, to Christ; and you will find that the Old Testament Scriptures are in full accord with what we call the New Testament, while the New Testament Scriptures fling great light upon the Old. The New Testament, if rightly apprehended, throws a wonderful light upon what God has given us in figure, type, and shadow in the Old Testament.

But a person may say, What is the object of the Old Testament? Well, it is really the picture-book of Christ. You will find in it, if you search, that which brings out, by way of illustration, the most precious truths concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the chapter now before us, the Lord adduces four witnesses to Himself, and it is of vast importance that you and I should pay heed to what Jesus says. (1.) John the Baptist bore witness of Him: "Ye sent unto John, and *he bare witness* unto the truth" (ver. 33). (2.) "But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, *the same works that I do, bear witness of me*"

(ver. 36). (3.) And then, again, "*The Father* himself, which hath sent me, *hath borne witness of me*" (ver. 37). (4.) And, last of all, the Scriptures bear witness of Him: Ye "search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and *they are they which testify of me*" (ver. 39). But He adds, very solemnly, "and ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Ye "search the scriptures": I can commend you for that, He says; but eternal life is not found in Scripture. "They are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." This fourfold testimony to Christ might well convince any heart.

I have no doubt He was then addressing a company of cavilling Jews. I am not addressing a company of cavillers, I trust. I do not think many of you young fellows are of that hopeless class, who despise grace, and refuse the truth. I trust and believe you have come here with a desire to really learn that which will meet the need of your souls, for time, and eternity. I think you are in earnest. I am in earnest, by grace; and trust, by God's help, to show you that the knowledge of Christ is transcendently important. Now, many a young man thinks that it is a poor thing to be a Christian. I say it is the grandest thing possible to be a Christian; and there could not be a better time, for a man to become a Christian, than when he is young. Why? Because, if God spare you to have a long life, how much better will that life be, if spent in the service of the blessed Son of God, than spent in a routine of sin, folly, and unsatisfying pleasure, which never give any real blessing to the soul, even though at the close of your days you may turn to the Lord. I do not think any man who turns to Christ, in the

last hours of his life, can look back on his life with pleasure.

Is there a man here this evening who says, I will go on with the things of the flesh and the devil until I am about to be called out of the world, and then I will turn to Jesus? And what will you then give Him? You will give to Jesus the dregs of a badly spent life. What do you think of yourself? I know what you think. You would judge a man who did that to be a downright poltroon. Nevertheless, such is Christ's grace, that even so, you would be received. He says He will not cast out any one that comes to Him. But what I want you to do is to possess Christ as a present, living, loving Saviour. You may have Him, my friends, where you are, this evening. You may have the knowledge of eternal life now, and may go on your way in the sweet and happy service of the Lord, and in the enjoyment of His love; and you may depend upon it, the possession of a good conscience is a great thing; and the possession of eternal life is a wonderful thing. To be in the service of Christ, is infinitely better than being in the service of the devil.

The god of this world knows all his troops; he knows all his subjects. I admit, my friends, he may keep you in peace, and may not make you aware of his government; but our Lord says, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace" (Luke xi. 21). And who is the strong man? The devil. And what is his palace? The world. And who are his goods? Sinners. I was, at one time. Thank God! I am not. If you are not on the Lord's side, you are. Each one is marked. Ah! but you do not like to own the hall-mark. You may depend upon it, God knows those who are His, and the devil knows

who are his. Yes, it is very simple. You are either on the Lord's side, or not. Which side are you on? If you have never been to the blessed Lord hitherto, let me urge you to-night to have to do with Him now. For, mark! you must at some time. Every man that faces me to-night must have to do with the Lord Jesus Christ, sooner or later. It may be to-day. It may be to-morrow. You have no lease of life. You may have taken your lodgings, or your house, for a month, or on a lease; but you have no lease of life, and you cannot tell when you may pass into eternity. Either then, or now, you must have to do with the One whose blessed words we have before us this evening. I pray you to hear them. Oh, hear the words of the blessed Lord! It is of vast importance to give heed to His voice.

You may observe that our Lord speaks of two hours in this fifth of John. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live" (ver. 25). Again, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (vers. 28, 29). You have here brought out the absolute contrast of the two hours; the hour of grace, and the hour of judgment. Mark this! there is a very great difference between "the resurrection of life," and "the resurrection of judgment." It is a common thought that there is going to be a general resurrection by-and-by. Such is not what Scripture teaches; there is no general resurrection. There are two resurrections; the resurrection of life, and the resurrection of judgment.

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection," saith Scripture (Rev. xx. 6). The two resurrections are separated by at least a thousand years. There is no doubt about it. In Revelation xx. 4, 5, the risen saints are spoken of as living, and reigning for a thousand years with Christ; and then we read, "But the rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years were finished." The first resurrection takes place before the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, the second resurrection is after the close of that reign. Be certainly assured that the Lord Jesus will yet reign. He is King of kings, and Lord of lords, and He is going to reign over the earth. The first man lost it; the second Man redeems it. The first man brought the curse into it; and the second Man, the last Adam, will remove that curse, and bring in universal blessing when He comes to reign as King.

The resurrection of life, and the resurrection of judgment, are as different as light and darkness. The resurrection of life is the portion of the man who has Christ, and if dead, when Jesus comes again, he is raised to life. The man who has lived and died in his sins, and has not known Christ, is raised to judgment. And what will that be? Oh! do not you face it. Do not you risk it. Stop, friend, I implore you, do not risk it. I will not attempt to delineate it; how could I? No tongue of man can depict that awful moment when God raises man for judgment. Enough that it is a resurrection of judgment, and every sensible man should flee from it. Every man who has his senses exercised before God will flee from it. The resurrection of life is a resurrection unto blessing. It is the moment when the Lord shall come, and shall take up from the grave His own people, bought by His own

blood, and who, through grace, have found Him to be their Saviour. The resurrection of judgment is when unblessed men will stand before the great white throne, and be judged according to their deeds.

Do you think, for a moment, that a man who has spent a life in sin will not be judged? How can he get off in the judgment day? How can you get off then, if the question of forgiven sin be unsettled? The whole genius of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ makes that impossible; because the great truth of the gospel is that, after sin entered into the scene where man had fallen, and before the moment when God must judge it, Christ has stepped in, and borne that judgment. Consequently the believer never goes into judgment, which is exactly what our scripture affirms. Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (vers. 24, 25).

And what is the result of hearing the Son of God? "They that hear shall live." What kind of life? It is life eternal! Not life in this world! Not life in this scene! You have that already, but it is forfeited. You cannot tell how long you may have it. Thank God, the believer has eternal life. In that 24th verse our Lord Jesus Christ brings before us the present, the past, and the future. About the present, He says, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life;" then as regards the past, He says the believer "*is passed* from death unto life;" and if he look at the future, "*shall not come*

into condemnation." The whole horizon of the soul is filled up by that one verse. How beautiful! How simple! "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me." Do I hear His voice? Do I hear His word? Do I believe the Father sent Him? I do, from the bottom of my heart, and I confess that He is what He says He is. I confess Him Son of God, and Son of Man. I confess my need of Him, and my faith in Him. And who sent Him? The Father sent the Son. What a wonderful thing that the Father, the Eternal Father, should have sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world. Yes, Scripture says, "The Saviour of the world." Wonderful and amazing truth! Yes, the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, and that Son went into death to take you and me out of it. He died on the cross, and presented His own precious blood as an atonement for sin, so that man might be washed in that precious blood, and be presented to God, in all its cleansing efficacy, the recipient of eternal life.

Observe that the Lord says here, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath everlasting life*." Life possessed, is the point here. And what was our state before we lived? Dead. Mark that. You may have natural life; I admit it. You may have plenty of it. Perhaps it is not a life you would care to have exposed. You would, most probably, not like everybody to know what the deeds and doings of that life have been. That is not my concern. God knows that. My friend, look here, you have not spiritual life; but the Gospel of John brings before us the blessed truth of Jesus coming into this world, revealing God to us, and bringing to us the very thing we had not. There are two sides

of the gospel. There is what I call the negative and the positive side of the gospel. What is the negative side? The negative side is the meeting of my need. And what is the positive side? That which comes to me, and becomes mine in the Person of Christ. I will show you what I mean.

In the First Epistle of John, we read, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." He brings us what we had not got—life. That is the positive side. But then it adds, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." There is the negative side of the gospel. Christ takes away what we had got—our sins. You see the gospel, when it comes to a man, tells him of his sins. That is naturally the first thing. When a man is touched by the Spirit of God, is quickened and awakened, he immediately thinks of his sins. Quite right! Think about *your* sins, for sins you have. You are a sinner, and you ought to know how you have sinned. The first thing that is touched is your conscience, and it is a blessed thing when conscience whispers, "Thou art the man."

But what do I see the grace of Christ doing for my sins? I see them all blotted out in His own precious blood. My conscience accuses me of sin, and then comes the thought, I have not a life that will suit God; I have not one thing suitable to God. I get the sense that I am dead towards God, and then I hear, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might *live through him*." God proposes to give you life, eternal life; and observe, "the *gift* of

God is eternal life." You cannot win it, or earn it. You cannot buy it, and do not deserve it. But God gives us it.

I know the wages of sin is death, but what do I see? Christ, if I may so speak, taking those wages, that you and I might be saved. I see the cross, and the work He has done on the cross. He has taken all the penalties and demerit of sin, borne sins, atoned for them, and, thank God! blotted them out. "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. ix. 26). Look, look at the cross. There *my* sins have been borne, and have disappeared.

See then, as the fruit of the cross, how God can righteously and freely give us life, eternal life. My dear fellows, have you this life? The man who has it not is in a poor case. How frail is the life you have. Only this week some one told me of one of your comrades who died just a week ago. He felt ill; a little operation was performed, and in three days he was gone into eternity! That is number two this session. My dear friend, do not you think you had better be ready for eternity? Do you think you would be a worse man for being a Christian? Suppose you are going to be a doctor, do you think you would be a worse doctor for being a Christian?

But, says some one, I am going into a line of life where I cannot be a Christian. Well then, clear out of it; that is all I have to say. Why ensure your soul's eternal damnation? If I cannot take Christ into the line I am going to take up, then I will clear out of it. The point is this, I have to go into eternity. You have eternity before you. How will you spend it? Where will you spend it? And with whom will

you spend it? You may not know; I know what my eternity is going to be. It is to be an eternity with Christ. Thank God! I know that I have eternal life, and every Christian should know that, for "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life; and shall not come into condemnation," shall never be judged, "but is passed from death unto life," says the Saviour.

Now how does this come to pass? The Lord tells us, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." This hour began with His own ministry on earth, and is not finished; though He has finished the work of redemption, and is now at the right hand of God in glory. But who are the dead? All who have not heard and believed Him are dead. Those who have, live, for "the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." Nothing could be simpler, nor more sure. "Verily, verily," is a good foundation for faith to repose on. It is not often we get that in Scripture; but rarely did Jesus use those words. I conclude that the Lord so speaks to press us to listen to Him. Mighty indeed are the results of hearing the voice of the Son of God. "They that hear shall live." Blessed is the man that has heard the voice of the Son of God. I know it. I believe there are some sitting here to-night, who can say, I have heard the voice of the Son of God speak to me in these students' meetings. They were human lips through which it came, but it was His voice I heard, the voice of the Son of God. His word sank into my heart, and I am quickened.

It is important to notice the difference in the

character of the two hours of which our Lord speaks here. During the first hour He quickens into life by His word: "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;" and beside this the Father "hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man. Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." There is the second hour, the hour of judgment. Do you suppose the patience of God will always last? Do you think the first hour is endless, and that the long-suffering of God with man's sin is to be infinite and eternal? Make no mistake, the first hour is about to close. "The long-suffering of our Lord is salvation" (2 Pet. iii. 15); but the hour-glass is to be turned. When, God only knows; but the turning thereof will introduce judgment in place of grace. God is giving you now the opportunity of being saved. Hear what the Lord Jesus says: "These things I say, that ye might be saved" (ver. 34). Are you saved? Not yet! Do you not want to be saved? He wants you to be saved. How may you be saved? Only by Him. Will works do it? A dead man cannot work, and that is what you are. Works cannot do it. I know people think they can be saved by works. That is an egregious mistake!

I recollect the time when I was not converted. I began to think of my soul, and I thought I must do something. I used to set myself a hard Bible-task, which I thought was meritorious. I tried to master the prophecies of Isaiah; but I soon got tired of them. I was only a poor dead man, trying to work out a salvation I did not possess. I was dead when I

began, and dead when I finished. Of course I failed; but God stepped in, and the Son of God spoke to me shortly after. Blessed be His name, I heard His voice. Have you heard it? Oh, my friend, hear it now. "The hour is coming, and *now is*." That is the hour of grace. It is a long one, I admit. Take the figure of the hour-glass. The hour of God's grace has been running on from the moment in which Christ then spoke. His death, resurrection, and ascension to glory have transpired, and still that hour has run on. But it is well-nigh spent, and our Lord says another "hour is coming," and what will then take place? The hour-glass is turned, and what has been the hour of mercy and salvation becomes the hour of judgment. Do not you think that it is a great mercy that hour-glass is not yet turned, because you are not saved yet? When turned, the unbeliever will be found without salvation, and without the possibility of being saved. It might be turned to-night. In the meantime, thank God, it is not turned, and there is yet another opportunity for you and me to reach the Saviour, if we have not yet done so.

If you have not yet come to Him, who says in the tenth of John, "I am the door," hear His voice now. You may be saved to-night if you will enter in. Christ says, I am the door. Come, He says, enter in by Me. It is Christ you must know. It is Christ you need. I believe many of you have a longing, and a desire for Christ. You have a longing desire for rest that the world cannot give. I will ask you a simple question, Has the world satisfied you? No. I find a man saying, "I am going to a ball to-morrow night, and to something else on Tuesday, and I would like something else on Wednesday—I must have a

little fun." A little will not do for me. I must have something that is perpetual; I must have something that is perennial; and what is that? The grace and love of Christ. That grace and love of Christ fill the heart with peace and joy. Perhaps you say, I thought it was a dull thing to be a Christian. That is a thorough mistake. The only really bright thing I know is to be a Christian. Everything connected with Christ is blessed and durable. Every earthly joy is transient. The world's laughter is vanity, for "as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool. This also is vanity" (Eccles. vii. 6). That fire soon burns out, that is the meaning of it. The laughter of the fool is like the crackling of thorns under a pot, there is no durability about it. There is no durability in what you are engaged in. There is no durability in the pleasures of sin. They are only for a season, and you have to meet their consequences and pains in eternity; but the love of Christ fills the heart with joy in this world and for ever. He saves you and lets you know that you are saved.

But you say, Is it not presumption to say that? How can it be presumption, if He does it? Suppose some one were to jump into the water and seize you when you were drowning, would you think it was presumption for you to say, you owed your life to the man who risked his own to save yours? The reason you are not sure of your salvation is, because you have been thinking you have something to do in regard to it. It will not do. You have not been brought to the point of seeing that you can do nothing whatever, and that you must rest alone on the love and work of Christ. Until I see I am hopelessly lost, I shall never give up my struggling. Let me illustrate

my meaning. A man had fallen overboard. The harbour was deep, and there were no boats about. The man was drowning, for he could not swim, and the cry rang out for help. There was one man, a capital swimmer, near at hand, who had saved many from drowning, and he was called. "Jim, you are wanted, there is a man overboard." When Jim came down to the spot, everybody thought he would jump in at once. Instead of that, he quietly looked at the struggling man. There he was in the water, splashing, and using all his strength to keep afloat. The crowd eagerly cried to Jim, who held his peace. "Go in, man. It is a shame. That man will be drowned."

The man went down, but he came up again, and when he came up the first time, he came up pretty strong. He could splash a good bit, and showed a good deal of strength. Again the crowd urged Jim; "Coward," they called him; but Jim held his peace, and the man went down again. Then Jim took off his jacket and his boots. The man came up the second time, and still did a good deal of splashing and struggling. At last he flung up his hands, exhausted, and was about to sink again, when like an arrow Jim dashed to his side, put him on his shoulder, and brought him ashore, and saved him. He was then asked, "Why in the world did you not go in sooner?" His reply was simple: "Because he was too strong; if I had gone in at first, he would have dragged me down, and I should not have been able to drag him out."

That is just the difficulty with many as to their souls. You are too strong. You have been doing too much. You think you must bring something, and you must do something. That is not it. You are

without strength, a poor sinner, and must let Jesus save you. The gospel is very simple, and very blessed. Listen! "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. v. 6). It is all the work of Christ. There is no work on your, or my side. Salvation is by faith, and faith only, not by works. "Unto him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 5). It is the work of Christ, done for us, that meets the claims of God. Then comes the sweet word of the gospel, which convicts me as a lost, ruined, and undone sinner, and then I listen to Christ's blessed voice, saying, "Come unto me and I will give you rest." I listen and believe, and, as I believe, I pass from death unto life. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming. and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." You receive life, eternal life, from the Son of God. But there is a second hour coming, and a very solemn hour it is, for it is the hour of judgment. Will the Christian come into it? Never. The Christian will not be judged. "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation (or judgment), but is passed from death unto life" (ver. 24). And why will not the Christian be judged. Because the Saviour has been judged for him; and, so the Lord says here, the man who believes in Me will not be judged, he shall not come into judgment.

Elsewhere we read, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii. 1). The second resurrection is unto judgment, but the first resurrection is unto life. Then the Lord

will come for His own people, and rescue all those whose hearts have been yielded up to him, not merely in word, but in reality. Is there a link between your heart and the Saviour, who lives in glory? If so, He says, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." On the other hand, the man who does not believe the gospel is on his way to judgment. That is a poor look-out, a dark look-out. If you are a wise man, you will gladly say, Christ for me. Let others make their choice as they will, but Christ for me! is the language of my heart; and believing on Him, I hear Him say, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth in me hath everlasting life" (John vi. 47). That is most assuring. Not less so is that verse with a top and a bottom, but no middle: "He that believeth on the Son *hath everlasting life:* and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John iii. 36). Which half of the verse are you in, the top or the bottom half? If the bottom, the wrath of God abides on you; if the top, you possess eternal life. Make sure of where you are.

CHAPTER IX.

A Soldier's Desire; or, Prayer and its Answer.

(Acts x., xi. 1-18.)

THIS is rather a long story, perhaps some of my hearers may say to-night, but it is a very interesting one. If it has no interest to you, my friend, it has a very deep interest for me; and for this reason, that the Spirit of God describes to us, in this remarkable narrative, the way in which the gospel of the grace of God first went out to the Gentiles. You must bear in mind that the Jew was nationally in relationship with God, but the Gentile —the heathen, for that is the meaning of the word— had no link with God. It is to such that the apostle Paul says, "Wherefore, remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision, by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. ii. 11, 12). As Gentiles, they had no link with God, and therefore you will not understand this chapter unless you see clearly, that God was beginning a new work of grace. It was an entirely new departure in the ways of God. He was sending

out, and was determined to send out, beyond the limits of Israel, the gospel—the good news of His love. He was going to proclaim that glad tiding to nations who had never heard it before.

I do not know what you feel, but I can say, from the bottom of my heart, Thank God, that He has done so; because, I happen to be one of them, and, I suppose, you are too. If you are a Jew, there is a Saviour for you, but here is the first time that the news is proclaimed, that there is a Saviour, and an eternal salvation for the Gentiles, and we are introduced here to the first company of Gentiles who, as such, heard and received the gospel.

The first trophy of grace among the Gentiles was this remarkable centurion, Cornelius by name. Evidently he was an Italian, for he belonged to the Italian band. He was a Roman centurion, and a man of remarkable character, but then living in Palestine, at Cæsarea, which was a most important military post, viewed from the standpoint of the Romans. He was there in charge of a company of soldiers. Somehow or other this man had a great longing to know God's salvation. He was a man seeking light, and no person can read this scripture without being impressed that this man was in downright, dead earnest; absolutely, red-hot earnest, as I might say. His character was quite unique for a Roman soldier, for he was "a devout man, and one that feared God, with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway" (ver. 2).

Now what about the man that never prays? God can save even that man, but it is interesting to see that this man was prayerful. He was not only prayerful, but it comes out that he was fasting until

the ninth hour of the day. The man was, as I said, in downright earnest: he had not broken his fast until three o'clock in the afternoon. What was he about? He had spent his time in looking to God for light. No wonder that man got blessing: he was in such deep, downright earnestness, I repeat, before God. He wanted blessing, and he got it. Do you want blessing? For any sake, be in earnest then!

I see here the value of prayer. It is not that I would tell you, that you must pray in order to be saved: that would be to make salvation depend upon prayer, which it does not. But I find when a man is really awakened by the Spirit of God, and is exercised before God about his soul, that the longings of his heart will come out in prayer. He has not got much light; but he can pray. He wants Christ: he knows there is something to be had, which he does not possess. The centurion was a man, I have no doubt, who at this point was already converted, but had not peace with God. He had been quickened by the Spirit of God, but did not know the gospel. He was not a formalist, a cold Pharisee, dependent upon rites and ceremonies: he was a man whose outward character, I think, would bear very favourable comparison with that of any person in this building to-night. I do not know whether you are known as "a devout person; one that feared God with all his house" (mark that, for it was apparently a pretty big one), "which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always." He was a devout man, a God-fearing man, a benevolent man, and a prayerful man, and yet he was not saved.

But, you say, if that does not save a person, what will? Not all that, nor ten thousand times all that.

That does not save. Yet, you say, you said yourself that he was a converted man. Yes, I believe he was: he was a man who had turned to God; but, when I say "saved," I use the word advisedly. I use it, as it is used in the New Testament, and by being a saved man, I mean, a man who is in the liberty of the new creation: a man who knows the liberty of the grace of God, who knows what it is to be brought to God: a man who knows that his sins are forgiven, that he is accepted of God, is His child, and can call Him Father. That is what Cornelius did not know. Oh, you say, could a man be converted, and yet not know that he was saved? There are hundreds of men, who are truly converted, and yet do not know that their sins are forgiven. Possibly, friend, you are one of them: you have had longings after Christ, and light for weeks past: you fear God: you are longing deeply to possess the blessing of God, you have turned your back upon the world, and still you have not peace. Why? You ought to have it. The fact is, you are not simply resting on Christ's finished work, and God's testimony to His satisfaction therein. That alone gives the soul solid peace.

Now Cornelius was a man who had never heard the gospel. You must not compare Cornelius with the men of Edinburgh; because the centurion was a man who had no right, or rather, felt that he had no right to salvation. He knew God was the God of the Jews, and he knew that salvation was of the Jews, and he no doubt said, I am a Gentile, and therefore have no right to it. You see, his very uprightness and honesty were the source of his distress. Look then how God loves to meet this anxious man! Look how He desires to meet the man who is in

earnest. He takes all this trouble, if I may so speak, in order to bring liberty, and blessedness, and peace to this troubled man. My friends, I would that you knew the deep interest God takes in man's salvation. Oh! worldly man, you who think little of the Lord, if you only knew the love of His heart, and the infinite interest He takes in you, your heart would be captured by Him right away.

Look at this chapter! He sends an angel to the troubled man, and sends a vision to His praying servant, Peter.

In this chapter you have Cornelius on the one hand, praying at Cæsarea, and another man praying forty miles away, on the house-top. Both are being prepared by God for each other. He sends to the anxious man an angel, and says, so to speak, I know what you want, Cornelius; you will get what you want. And He says, by the vision, to Peter on the house-top, I want you to get rid of all your old Jewish ideas; you must get all your old ideas and prejudices knocked out of your head, and you must go and do what I bid you. Thus He prepares the servant, ere he comes in contact with the poor troubled Gentile, to whom he is to carry the gospel news.

Now a man may be turned to God, and his soul be quickened by the Spirit of God, he can have holy desires, and he may fear God, and yet he may never really know what the gospel is. You may say to me, "What is the gospel?" I think this chapter will unfold it; but, in brief, let me tell you what I mean by the gospel. The gospel that comes from God now is the fruit and result of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and, by His grace now upon earth, there

is the ministry of the Spirit of God, come down from heaven, a true and blessed witness who tells of forgiveness, and of redemption, and assures you that, if believing in the Lord Jesus, you are saved, that your sins are forgiven, and that you are a child of God. You, as a child of God, receive the Holy Ghost, who brings you into the joy, and the satisfaction that is provided by Christianity.

My idea of a Christian is that of a man who is brimful of joy from one year's end to another. You say, I do not meet many of that stamp. I admit that; but you have not got the right stamp before you. Look at Paul: you find him full of joy and peace. But you say, he was an apostle. I know that, but it was not his apostleship that filled him with joy; it was the knowledge of Christ dwelling in him. And what will fill your heart with joy? What has filled my heart with joy during these seven-and-thirty years? Christ! Aye, and He will fill your heart with joy: He will forgive your sins, where you sit, and He will save you, and will let you know you are saved through the work He has accomplished for you.

Let us see how Cornelius received blessing. He was in prayer, and evidently saw a vision, about three o'clock in the afternoon, of "an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius" (ver. 3). He was frightened; so is every man when God gets near to him. Sinner, you will get frightened when you have the sense that God draws near to you. Jacob was afraid when God drew near that night on which he was left alone by the river's side. The shepherds were afraid when the angels were sent to tell them of the birth of the Saviour. Cornelius was

afraid. There never was a man yet who was not afraid when the Lord drew near, because conscience tells him—just what conscience told me—that a sinner in his sins is not fit for God.

The angel addresses Cornelius, and says to him, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God" (ver. 4). Cornelius says, "What is it, Lord?" He is evidently surprised that God should visit him. The greatest surprise that ever I got in my life was when the Lord saved me. I never had such a surprise all my days as on the night the Lord saved me; and I believe if you get God's salvation now that it will be a most wonderful surprise to you, that He in His great and infinite goodness should save a wretched, ruined sinner like you.

I understand the man's feelings as he expresses them in these words, "Lord, what is it?" And what is God's answer? This, if I may put it into other language, I am going to bless you, Cornelius. He says: "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: he lodgeth with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do" (vers. 4-6).

And when Simon does come to the troubled soul, do you observe what he does tell him to do? "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (ver. 43). What the messenger says to the troubled soul, when he gets into his presence, is, Believe in God's Son: believe in the One, whom the world has refused, and whom God has taken into

glory. He tells him, that all the prophets bear witness to this blessed truth, that from Christ he will obtain forgiveness of his sins, and all he has "to do" is to believe in Him.

Well, what do I find the man does? The angel departs, and Cornelius, now in downright earnestness of soul, immediately calls "two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually, and when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa" (vers. 7, 8). Not to-morrow—no! that same day, clearly. They went off that day. Cornelius was not like a great many lazy sinners nowadays, who put off the salvation of their souls until to-morrow. I met a young man of this sort some time ago, perhaps he is here to-night. A fortnight ago a friend of his died, and after he came home from the funeral, he said to a Christian: "That young man was converted on his death-bed. Do you believe in death-bed repentance?" "Yes," said the Christian. "Oh! then," said the young fellow, "that is capital, it will do." "What will do?" asked his friend. "I will put off being a Christian till my death-bed." Awful folly!

Friend, I suppose you mean to be converted some day? Do not put it off: no, no, do not put it off till your death-bed. There is only one death-bed repentance given us in Scripture, that no man may presume; but there is one, that none may despair. I have little faith in them. Rowland Hill called them not death-bed conversions, but death-bed fear of hell and damnation. He was not far wrong.

Oh! you say, I believe in the goodness of God. Yes, He is good, and infinitely better than you dream of, but is that a reason for you to refuse His grace,

and put off your soul's eternal salvation till the moment of your death-bed? If so, you are like another foolish man I have heard of, and he was like you. He procrastinated, and he meant to come to Christ in the future, for he believed in the goodness of God. He was surrounded by Christian friends, and they often pleaded with him to come to the Lord. But he was like you—he loved the world, and he would do anything for the world. His world was pretty much wrapped up in the hunting-field: he did not care for anything but hunting. When his friends pressed on him to turn to God he replied: "Would not God bless me if I went to Him on my death-bed? I believe so in His goodness that if I were to turn to Him on my death-bed, the Lord would have mercy upon me; and then I will do it." So he calmed his soul, if troubled somewhat by the words that were spoken to him. One day he was hunting: he was on the back of an exceedingly fine horse, and, to make up to the hounds, he had to take a hedge. His horse sprang through the brushwood, but on the other side was a flock of sheep, which were frightened as he came over. They scampered right and left, and the horse was startled. It stumbled, and threw its rider. As he fell he was heard to say—not "God have mercy upon me"—not a bit of it! what he said was, "Devil take ye." He broke his neck, and died on the spot. Oh! procrastinating sinner! remember the last words of this man—so like you—were not, "God have mercy upon me," but, "Devil take ye." The devil did not take the sheep, but he took the godless rider that day. Take care, that he does not take you, my friend.

Now, Cornelius may well teach us a lesson here.

He sends at once, when he learns that there is one who can tell him the way of salvation. That is what he wanted, and immediately he despatches his servants on their journey of about forty miles, for that was the distance between Cæsarea and Joppa.

"On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the house-top to pray, about the sixth hour." It is interesting to see how the Lord prepares His servant, in this chapter. He let him fall into a trance: he was not asleep; he was in a trance. God was going to teach Peter a wonderful lesson, and he sees this remarkable sheet coming down from heaven. Mark, it says, "And saw heaven opened." We find heaven opened four times in the New Testament.

Do you know that heaven is opened just now. It was once opened for the Father to look down upon Jesus on earth; to see the man in whom God delighted (Matt. iii. 16). In the seventh of Acts it is opened for faith to look up, and see Jesus there. Stephen says, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts vii. 56). Here Peter "saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him," and he says in the eleventh chapter, when he tells the story to the Church at Jerusalem, "And it came even to me" (Acts xi. 5). It was a lesson to him; and there comes a lesson from heaven to you to-night, that Jesus is willing to save you where you are in this hall. "And it came even to me"—what was the lesson? That there was no limit to the grace of God. Peter "saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet, knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth; wherein were all

manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air" (vers. 11, 12). I do not doubt but that God here presents man as he is in his natural characteristics, but saved by grace, and taken to heaven. The fourth time heaven is seen opened is in the Book of Revelation, when the King of kings comes to reign, and all His saints with Him (Rev. xix. 11).

But Peter says presently, "The vessel was received up again into heaven." God takes it back again, and that is just what one would expect; nothing goes into heaven but what comes out of it. And how, you ask me, do you expect to get to heaven? I will tell you. My Saviour came for me: He bled and died for my sins, and put them away, and the Spirit of God has begun His work of grace in my soul. Were it not so, I could not go to heaven. There is nothing in either you or me that fits us for heaven. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," the third of John tells us; that is to say, man as such cannot go into heaven; he must be born again; there must be a work of God's Spirit in his soul, as well as a work wrought for him by the Son of God on the cross. The contents of the vessel just show us that there is no limit to the grace of God. His grace meets and saves the most unlikely, and the apparently most unsuited.

God's grace prepares Peter for the work before him, but he does not learn his lesson very quickly. He finds out, however, that the goodness of God is going to override all his former ideas, and that the blessed gospel is going into other spheres than the Judaism of which he had thought so much. This lesson he does not learn immediately, for he "doubted in himself what this vision that he had seen should mean"

(ver. 17). But "while Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee." Observe "the Spirit said,"—it is not an angel who speaks. When it is a question of dealing with the soul, and carrying the truth to the soul, the Spirit speaks. The Holy Ghost whispers to Peter, and what does He say? "Behold, three men seek thee. Arise, therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them" (vers. 19, 20). Immediately Peter goes down. There are the men at the door. They have found out the place where Simon lives: they are in search of the Evangelist, and meantime the Evangelist has been prepared by God to carry His message to an anxious soul.

Ah! friend, are you anxious to-night? Good! it is a sweet message I have for you—Pardon, Peace, Salvation! Nothing is so charming as preaching the gospel. Why do you preach? I have been asked. Well! I tell you honestly, I cannot say that I was bred, trained, or authorised by man to preach, but I have the sense of God's love to me, and I want you to share it, that is why I have asked you to come here to-night. Immediately you know what the grace of God is, you want others to have that knowledge too: you want others to have the same joy as yourself. Even Cornelius illustrates this, for when he knew he was to hear the way of salvation, he "called together his kinsmen and near friends" (ver. 24) to share the blessed news with them.

But let us follow Peter down from the house-top. He goes to the door and asks the men, "What is the cause wherefore ye are come?" (ver. 21.) Peter greatly interests me: although he is so slow at his

work. He had not fully realised this new departure in the ways of God. To this interrogation the three men reply: "Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and *to hear words of thee*" (ver. 22).

The ways of God with souls as presented in Scripture are beautiful, and you who are Christians, I think, will enjoy what I am now going to speak about, if you have not noticed it before. When God was going to send the gospel of His grace to the Gentiles, whom does He select as the first vessel, if I may so speak, into which He will put His treasure? It is not a scandalous man: it is not a blasphemer, or a cursing man. That would have been to awaken Jewish opposition. He selects a man, concerning whom the Jews had already issued a "good report," since he was a "devout man." Ah! said God, you go and tell that devout man the gospel, Peter! That is the man whom God selects here. If we be spared till another Lord's Day evening, we will see how His grace will go out to a man, who has not one single thing to commend him.

It is beautiful to see how the Lord sends His messenger to one whose outward character was blameless: even the Jews bear record of him, that he was a just man, and one that feared God, notwithstanding the fact that he was a Gentile, and a Roman, and very likely oppressing them in the execution of the laws of his master, the Emperor of Rome,—still the whole nation said he was a just man. He had not the gospel, it is true; but he was now to get it.

Peter lodges the strangers over-night, "and on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him" (ver. 23). His action in taking them was remarkable, for I should not have said that caution was Peter's leading feature; but on this occasion for manifest reasons he does not like to go into the business alone. Three men come to ask for the truth, Peter takes with him six brethren to be witnesses of what was going on. I have often said I should have liked to have been the seventh man to go down with Peter that day, and see the wonderful tide of blessing that was about to roll into the house of Cornelius. If any one here is bound on a gospel mission, and you are sure you are going to a household of downright anxious souls, if you will invite me, I will go with you. I do not know anything more charming than the scene I get in this chapter, as Peter goes down to this household of anxious souls: it is a most lovely sight.

It was clearly a two days' journey from Joppa to Cæsarea, and four days had elapsed from the time the men were sent off for Peter, until he returned with them to Cæsarea. "And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him" (vers. 24, 25). A wonderful thing that for a Roman to do: they would scarcely even salute a stranger, that is a well-known fact. But here, Cornelius actually falls at the feet of this messenger, who, he knew, was the messenger of God to his soul: this only shows how earnest the man was. "But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up: I myself also am a man" (ver. 26). You are a man,

and so am I: we are on the same level. "And as he talked with him, he went in, and found *many that were come together*" (ver. 27). You will always find it so: when a person is interested in the truth, about which they are not clear, they want some one else to come and hear about it too. I should not be surprised if there are men in this hall, who though not clear themselves as to the gospel, have said to others, Come along with us: we will go and hear what this preacher has to say. That was exactly Cornelius' position: he had not got the light himself, but he could say, I know I am going to get it: I have had a message from God, and light is coming, so he fills his house with his friends and kinsmen.

Peter "found many that were come together." I have seen many audiences, and I have seen many a multitude; but, to tell the truth, the one multitude that chains my eye, and charms my heart, is a multitude of men and women that want to hear about Christ. People have often said to me, "Have you been to the picture gallery this year yet, doctor?" "No!" "Why not?" "Because, I should not see the pictures I want to see." "And what are you looking for?" "I will tell you the pictures I want,—one is a company of happy saints enjoying Christ, and desirous to hear more of Him, and the other is a company of anxious sinners, longing to find Him. If you can show me these pictures I will come."

Here we have this beautiful picture,—a company of anxious souls, waiting to hear about Jesus, and in comes the preacher. He begins with a word of explanation: "Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath

showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you, without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?" (vers. 28, 29.) I must say that I never quite understood that question. I cannot understand a man, who knows the grace of God, and is in the presence of anxious people, asking, "For what intent ye have sent for me?" I think, if I got into such a gathering, I should know, and I would say, I know what you want; you want the gospel: the Lord help me to give it to you.

Cornelius stands up, and tells his story. He merely says, An angel came to me while I fasted, and prayed, and told me what to do, and immediately I did it. Perhaps, some of you thought I was going beyond Scripture when I said, Cornelius sent his servants off immediately; but I was not, for I read: "Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God" (I wonder if these words can be applied to the company here to-night) "to hear all things that are commanded of thee of God" (ver. 33). He had the sense that they were to hear from God, and that this servant of God had to declare His message.

"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, *preaching peace by Jesus Christ:* (he is Lord of all:) that word, I say, ye know" (vers. 34, 35). Peter was evidently perfectly conversant with what had taken place: that Cornelius and his household had heard some of the truth in regard to Israel; but, as I said

before, whatever blessing or inheritance was Israel's, Cornelius, being a Gentile, in his uprightness of character, knew did not belong to him. He longed for peace, but thought only the Jew could get it. But what does the gospel bring to all now? Peace! When the Saviour was born, on that very day, the heavenly messengers proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace." What a priceless boon to weary sin-burdened souls! Peace! Let me ask you, Have you peace? Do you possess peace? Are your sins forgiven? Are you clear with God? Are you clear that you have escaped judgment? Answer these questions.

Beware of a false peace: I cannot deny that there are many men living in this city to-day, who have a false peace, for "when a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace" (Luke xi. 21). What does our Lord mean by these words? I think I understand. That palace is the world, and the strong man, who has his goods in peace, is the devil: he keeps his goods in peace. Young man, were you never troubled about your soul? Certainly not; why should I be? Your answer just illustrates this scripture. "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace." The devil, let me tell you, has an uncommonly good, a very diversified, a splendid armoury. He does not hold every one with the same suit, if I may say so. He knows how to meet every one. He will give you what you want.

He will hold some with the wine-cup; others, he will snare with a pack of cards; others, he will entangle with the theatre, or, it may be, with the novel, or the love of gold, or the power of lust, or the charms of knowledge, or something of that sort. You have never

perhaps felt sorrow for your sins; nor will you if he can keep you from thinking of these sins, and of the serious fact that you are a sinner. He will try all he can to keep you from being awakened to the fact that you are a guilty man, and by all means in his power rob you of the blessing of being born again, and brought to God. For many a long day a man may go on in false peace, thinking all is right, when all is wrong, for mark, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, *his goods are in peace.*" That is a false peace; the devil's lullaby for souls deceived by sin, and ofttimes helped hell-ward by a Christless religion. Thank God! if you are troubled now about your sins and your lost estate. Better far is it for a man to be in soul-trouble now, and thus get the peace which God gives, than to go on through life in the delusive peace which the devil ministers, only to wake up in eternity to the awful discovery that the peace was a fraud, and that God's judgment of sin is everlasting.

What we have before us in this scripture, is God's peace—peace by Jesus Christ—the peace of the weary—the peace of the troubled—the peace that God alone can give. And what is that? The knowledge that He has nothing against me, and that there is nothing between Him and me; that the claims of His infinitely holy throne have all been met in regard to myself, and my sins, and I can look at that throne with the sense, I am perfectly fit for it;—I am ready to stand before it. You say, How? Because He is pleased with what I have done? No! But because of the finished work of Christ. The knowledge of that work has let me see that there is not a single thing left between the infinitely holy God, and the infinitely sinful man, whose sin has been divinely and

definitively met by the atoning death of the blessed Son of God. Christ took my place in death and judgment, that God might give me His in life and glory. When that knowledge enters the heart, peace, like a river, surges through the soul; and that is the peace I have got.

But you say, Have you never any doubts? Doubts! What should I have doubts about? I do not doubt that by nature I am a guilty, godless, hell-deserving sinner, and till Christ met me I was bound there: I have not a doubt about that. Have you, as regards yourself? But since grace met and saved me, by the work of Another, why should I have a doubt? Have you any doubts, my friend? If so, I hope the Lord will dispel them to-night. If not saved you are on your road to hell; there can be no doubt as to that surely. If grace does not deliver you from the grip of Satan and the power of sin, you will spend eternity there. Oh, you say, I do not believe in such a place. You will have to believe it yet, mark that, my friends. You will be converted some day, on that point, depend upon it. See to it that it be not too late.

That is a fine stratagem of the devil to tell you that there is no judgment—no hell—no punishment hereafter. The pathway of Christ refuted that folly. Jesus, the Son of God, came down from heaven to earth, and died to deliver men like you and me from hell. He agonised on the cross that He might rescue me from the consequences of my sin, and blessed be His name, He has rescued me! Why do you not allow Him to rescue you to-night? "He is Lord of all." Not merely of the Jew, but of the Gentile as well. "He is Lord of all." Lovely word! He is my Lord: the time was when I was under another

master, and I served him faithfully, but now my master is changed. Time was when I had a bad master, and he had a very good servant. But now, I have an infinitely blessed Master, and He has a poor servant. Thank God! He is my Lord. Can you say the same? Do not be ashamed to say it.

A young woman came to me the other day, and said, "Four and a half years ago I was converted through your preaching, but I was ashamed to confess Jesus." "Ashamed of Jesus! Ashamed of the Lord! And what are you ashamed of now?" I asked. "Oh," said she, "I am ashamed now to confess that I ever was ashamed to own Him." Are you, my friend, ashamed of Jesus: ashamed to own your Lord: ashamed to own the Son of God? Wake up! wake up! There is an immense privilege open to you, to be on the Lord's side. "But," says somebody, "I am such a sinner." Never mind that: the deepest-dyed sinner may be saved by Jesus' grace. Let Him save you, and deliver you, and send you through this world as a witness of what grace can do.

People sometimes think it a poor thing to be a Christian. I think it a paltry thing not to be one: that is my decided conviction, and I advise every young man without any further delay to yield himself up to Him this evening, and be on His side, out-and-out. I do not like half and half work—a backboneless kind of Christian is no good at all. Such are like the salt the Lord speaks of; they are of no use for the field, and of no use for the dunghill (Luke xiv. 34, 35). There are a good many of this kind in the professing Church. They do not do the Church any good, and they do the worldling much harm, for their inconsistency and apathy encourage men in unbelief; in

fact, they are stumbling-blocks over which sinners stumble into hell. They have too much of the world to really enjoy Christ, and witness for Him, and their consciences will not let them go the whole way in the world. A young convert said to me this morning, "I like to see the people of the world downright." "So do I," I replied, "and you can tell them that hell is the end of their journey." "And, sir," said he, "I like to see a Christian out-and-out." That is just exactly what I like. I want it for myself, and I want you to be out-and-out too.

Having announced Him as "Lord of all," Peter goes on to tell the history of Jesus, and unfolds three great truths—God with us; God for us; and God in us. First of all, you find the truth of God with us: "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem: whom they slew and hanged on a tree" (vers. 38, 39). There you see the fulfilment of the scripture, "A virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is God with us" (Matt. i. 23).

Then Peter, from verse 40 to verse 43, brings out the truth, "God for us," while verse 44 gives us the truth, "God in us." "God for us" is shown in the death of Christ, and all the consequences of blessing which accrue to us from it. As the Holy Ghost falls upon all this assembly (ver. 44), we see the truth of "God in us." You must not forget that the Christian is a man in whose body the Holy Ghost dwells;

and therefore it is a very solemn thing to be a Christian.

Just a word or two then, as to verse 40 and onwards. "Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly." In the moment of His death Christ wrought atonement, when He bore the sinner's sins, and was made sin that we might escape its consequences. He sacrificed Himself, and thus infinitely glorified God; and what was the result? God raised Him up. I can tell you therefore of a risen, triumphant, victorious Saviour. That is the Saviour I know. He triumphed over sin, Satan, death, the grave, and the power of darkness; and as the risen man He lives before God. "Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead." There was unmistakable evidence of the reality of His Person. "And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he, which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead."

Observe, my friend, if you do not let Him save you, He will have to judge you. And you say, Will He not judge you too? No! blessed be His name, never! Why? Because He is my Saviour; that is the whole point. Judgment will not be a mockery. I quite admit, I shall have to give account of my walk and ways as a Christian; but, when you talk about judgment, that raises the question of the imputation of guilt; and do you think He is going to impute guilt to those for whom He died? Let Scripture answer: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather,

that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. viii. 33, 34). I have no fear of judgment; fear is gone out of my heart, because Christ is my Saviour. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? is the challenge. Let Satan accuse; the devil will do it if he can, but God will justify the believer, and He will silence the accuser. Christ died, and He died for me that I might be delivered, and saved; and, what He died to do, blessed be His name, He has done. He died for me that He might be my Saviour, and He has saved me, for I trust Him. Do you not trust Him? If so, you are saved by Him, as the fruit of His perfect love, and finished work. Well wrote Steele—

"He took the guilty culprit's place,
And suffered in his stead;
For man (O miracle of grace!)
For man, the Saviour bled."

As the righteous outcome of His finished work, Peter now declares: "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (ver. 43). That is the very thing I wanted; and the very thing you need. Every prophet bears witness that the one who trusts Jesus has forgiveness of his or her sins. Are these not sweet words? "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name *whosoever* believeth in him *shall receive* remission of sins." And what did the listeners to that lovely gospel do? They were dear, simple people, and they believed the gospel, for "while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word." This was the fulness of grace indeed. The triumph of grace is seen here.

There is nowhere in the ways of God with man, in which His grace sparkles with greater brilliancy, than in this scene, where the Gentile who had no claim on, and no link with Him, hears the gospel, in all its fulness, and the Holy Ghost falls on the believer, without either baptism, as in the case of the Jew (Acts ii. 38), prayer, as in the case of the Samaritans (Acts viii. 15), or laying on of hands, as in the case of the Jewish proselytes at Ephesus (Acts xix. 6). The hearing of faith secured the blessing when the "words" Peter spake fell from his lips.

"Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter, who shall *tell thee words*, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts xi. 13, 14), was the command Cornelius received, and the obedience of faith soon heard the words of life. I sometimes say that the little letter K is responsible for a good deal of mischief. WORDS and WORKS differ only in one letter. Knock out the D, and put in the K, and there is all the difference possible. WORDS were what Cornelius was to hear. He was not told to do any WORKS. Have you thought you had to do some WORKS, to obtain salvation? Not so, my friend. What you need is to hear words. You must knock that letter K out of your religion, or you will never be saved. But I hear some one say, Must I do nothing? Nothing, Christ has done everything; that is the whole point. "Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved," is God's way of salvation. When saved you are careful to "maintain good works," not in order to salvation, but just because you possess it.

Peter told them lovely words. What were the words? Listen! "To him give all the prophets

witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him *shall receive remission of sins.*" The forgiveness of sins, through the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the present possession of every soul, man or woman, that receives Him, and the Holy Ghost seals the faith of the believing one—He comes, and indwells all such. Peter's address was very short; but it had no sooner fallen from his lips, than the "Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word."

The Holy Ghost always seals the faith of a soul that trusts in Jesus. How then does a man get the Holy Ghost? By believing. He not only gets the forgiveness of his sins, but the Holy Ghost comes down and seals his faith. If I were you, I would not go away from this place without having the knowledge in your soul, that your sins were forgiven, and that you had received the Holy Ghost. It is your portion if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Hear what Paul says, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. i. 13). When a man buys sheep, he is only wise to put his own mark upon them: but observe, the mark does not make the sheep his: the purchase-money makes them his. He puts his mark upon them, to show that the sheep do belong to him, and so God marks every one of His children by giving them the Holy Ghost. He has put His mark on every one in this hall that really believes in Jesus.

And you, my friend, can soon find out if you have His mark upon you; if you truly know that Jesus loved you, and died for you, and you simply trust in Him, I believe you have the Holy Ghost sealing the

forgiveness of your sins. And now, I want you to join the choir to-night. What choir? The choir of the ransomed. People sometimes say, We have been asked to join the choir. Are you converted? I ask. If not, you cannot be in the choir of the redeemed, and that is the choir I want you to sing in. Every one who really believes in the name of Jesus, let him join in singing—

"Come sing, my soul, and praise the Lord,
Who hath redeemed thee by His blood;
Delivered thee from chains that bound,
And brought thee to redemption ground.

Redemption ground, the ground of peace!
Redemption ground, oh, wondrous grace!
Here let our praise to God abound,
Who saves us on redemption ground!

Once from my God I wandered far,
And with His holy will made war;
But now my songs to God abound;
I'm standing on redemption ground.

Oh, joyous hour when God to me
A vision gave of Calvary:
My bonds were loosed, my soul unbound;
I sang upon redemption ground.

No works of merit now I plead,
But Jesus take for all my need;
No righteousness in me is found,
Except upon redemption ground.

Come, weary soul, and here find rest;
Accept redemption, and be blest:
The Christ who died, by God is crowned
To pardon on redemption ground."

CHAPTER X.

FAITH—WHAT IS IT?

(ROMANS x.)

I WANT to speak to you a little to-night about faith—what it is, and what it leads to. There is a great deal in this chapter you observe about faith, and we are told in verse 17 that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

God is; and another scripture says, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. xi. 6). I have first of all to get in my soul the sense that God is. You may say, I do not know Him. That is quite true, and the question is, How can you know Him? You cannot learn Him from nature; but He reveals Himself by His Son and by His Word. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. i. 1, 2). The great thing to get hold of is this, that God has spoken. What you and I have to do is to listen, and I am certain of this, if you listen, you will believe, because faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. If you listen to God's Word, it will have an effect upon you, it will produce a deep, real mark upon you—a mark which reason will

not produce, because reason may turn a man away from God, and often does; but faith, the fruit of the reception of the Word of God, always leads a man to God.

Scripture is full of instances of faith, and of what faith can do. Remember, it "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." In that statement is contained the true value to the soul of the sound of God's own blessed Word. A man may ask me, What is faith? I do not know that I can define faith to you, but I will read you a scripture, which I think gives us a perfect definition of faith. This is found in the third chapter of the Gospel of St John. I find there these words concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, "He that cometh from above is above all; he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth." He that cometh from above can tell us what things please Him who is above; while he that is of the earth—you and I—I take it, one and all of us, could discourse about the earth, though perhaps you could not tell me a word about heaven. But continue: "He that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true" (John iii. 31-33). Very striking that! You must receive first of all what the Lord says of you. There is not a man—a Christian man—in this room, but will confess, I was forced to it. Man's heart naturally sets itself against God, but faith accepts his testimony. "*He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.*" There I believe you get the real definition of what faith is.

God has spoken by His Son the Lord Jesus, and

the man that receives His testimony, "sets to his seal that God is true." That is faith. What evidence have you got of the truth of what is alleged? you ask. None at all! There is no evidence to the senses, nor does faith ask it. Ask any person who is a believer, question any of your friends who have been born of God through grace, and have had their eyes opened, to know the blessedness of the love of God, the value of the cleansing of the blood of Christ, and the joy of knowing that they are saved—ask them how they first really got to know that they were saved, and they will tell you, by giving God credit for speaking the truth, by taking Him at His word, which is faith. Human reasoning and wisdom of words cannot manufacture faith; it comes by hearing the Word of God. A young man said to me, when coming to the meeting to-night, "I hope you will make it plain, doctor!" I cannot do that. I cannot make it plain to any man's mind, and I will tell you why, because the gospel is divine. It comes from God, and no human mind can explain it; and no human mind will receive it. Faith is the result of hearing God's Word, and the Spirit of God working upon the heart. The Word of God goes through a man, it convicts him, converts him, and gives him a new life somehow. He does not know how, but his eyes are opened, and he believes. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

This simple faith is a very blessed thing! It puts the soul wholly in touch with God. You are brought to have to do with God. Indeed, you must meet Him sooner or later. It is in vain for a man to endeavour to avoid this. Unbelief and nineteenth-century scepticism may lead you to say, "Perhaps

there is no God, and I shall not have to meet Him." Make no mistake, you will have to meet God sooner or later. You are a responsible creature—a sinner. It is the essence of responsibility that the creature, man, should have to meet God, his Creator, sooner or later. Why not meet Him now? Why not know Him now? The aversion men have to this shows something is radically wrong. Sin has produced strained relations, distance, and dread of God, and when you try to get near a man with the gospel, and want to put the blessed things of the Lord Jesus Christ before him, he is frightened at, or indignant, with you. He draws back, as if you were about to inflict some great injury upon him. That just shows that there is a natural repugnance in the heart of man to have to do with God. I do not deny it. It is perfectly true. I can remember the time when there was repugnance in my own heart to the things of the Lord Jesus. Thank God, that day has gone by, and I can echo the language of one of your companions, who said to me this day, as he confessed that he had got his eyes opened a week ago, "This has been the happiest week of my life!" I do not doubt it. It is bound to be the happiest week in a man's life when he comes to know the living God as his Saviour. If there be those here to-night without the knowledge of the Lord, and of His salvation, I trust they may learn from God's own Word, God's way of salvation, and how very blessed and simple it is. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

Now, observe how our chapter opens. In the first verse I find the apostle Paul saying, "My heart's desire and prayer for Israel is, that they might be saved." In that verse salvation is seen to be that

which the apostle greatly desired Israel to know, and salvation is what you and I need. Why? Because the naked truth as to the condition of man is that he is lost. Man is a lost sinner. There is no making a mistake as to that. There are only two classes in this hall to-night—the saved and the lost. There is no intermediate stage, no middle ground anywhere in Scripture. The Lord Jesus Christ brought that plainly out in His lifetime. You recollect in the fifteenth of Luke, He speaks of the Shepherd going out to seek the sheep which was *lost;* secondly, He gives us the figure of the woman who swept the house diligently for the bit of silver because it was *lost;* and thirdly, when the son comes back to his father's house, the father saw him afar off, ran to meet him, kissed him, and brought him into his house, saying, "Let us eat and be merry, for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was *lost*, and is found." Three times do I get that solemn description of man's condition—lost.

But in blessed contrast with man's awful condition, we get the activity of God—the Son, the Spirit, and the Father. The Son seeks the lost sheep, the Spirit liberates the wanderer from the death that lies upon him, and the Father receives the lost one, when he comes back. We have there not three parables, but one. "He spoke this parable," it says. Why? Because He was bringing out the activity of the love of God to man, the lost sinner. The gospel met me as a lost man, and convicted me of being lost, and when I took the place God gave me, He saved me on the spot.

The condition in which man is renders it an absolute necessity that he be born again. He needs not reformation, but new birth. Reformation will not do.

Have not I seen many a young man try to reform? Did not I try it myself? I recollect well the time when, on a sick-bed, I thought I was dying; and I was very near it. I remember well, when I thought I might soon die and felt my unfitnesss to die, that I turned to the Lord and cried, "If Thou wilt spare my life, I will serve Thee." God answered my prayer, and I recovered from my sickness; but I was more than ever the child of hell after than before. You see I was going to turn over a new leaf. I tried it for a time, but the fact was I was a lost sinner, and the devil was too strong for me, and I was soon worse than ever. Man has no strength in himself. He has to be brought to this point sooner or later—and you have to be—that he is a sinner, ungodly, without strength, and therefore a lost man.

People say to me sometimes, We thought a man was lost only if he left this world in his sins, and so passed into eternity. Scripture does not say so. When a man passes into eternity without the knowledge of God, I will tell you what he finds,—that he is damned. He finds out that he has to be judged by God, and none can rise out of that judgment. All men are lost now, and that is why Paul says, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." That was the very desire that filled my heart for you in having these meetings, and that I might shake hands joyfully with those who are saved, for I know there are a good many among you that are already on the Lord's side. My heart's desire and prayer to God is, that you might be saved to-night, if you have never been saved before, and faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

Have you heard God's Word, and bowed down before it, believing what it puts before you. I do not ask you to believe a word of mine. I want you to believe God's Word. I am certainly seeking to unfold that Word, and make it simple, and I love to point out to you that salvation is that which the gospel brings to a lost, undone, and irrevocably ruined creature, like you or me. The gospel meets me as I am, and after it has met me and shown me what I am, it shows me what Christ is, and what He has done for me. If you believe it, you will get what I got—salvation through the blessed Son of God.

Observe that St Paul says here of Israel, "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." I think there are still a great many men of this class. They have a zeal of God. They have thoughtful minds, and all young fellows are not careless. I believe students are considered a careless lot. That is quite true in the main, but a great many are thoughtful. A large proportion of those who come to hear my voice are thoughtful men. The apostle says, "I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." Now, such a man is doing his best to get saved. He has zeal, but not according to knowledge. Are you hard at work trying to mend your ways, and to do what you think is necessary for your salvation? I commend you for your zeal, but it is not according to knowledge, because the man who has had his eyes opened to the truth has learned this, I can do nothing.

The apostle further says, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted them-

selves unto the righteousness of God." What does that mean? That the man is ignorant of what God has done, and is ignorant of that which God has brought in through the Lord Jesus Christ. God can now justify a sinner who believes in Jesus, righteously, because He has been glorified about his sins by the death of Jesus, and His righteousness is manifested in raising Christ from the dead, and saving the one who trusts in Him. But the one who is "going about" to establish his own righteousness is in exactly the same position as the young man who went once to a monastery. He was a young fellow of noble birth, and splendid fortune. Like many another in that position, he thought he would enjoy life, and soon found himself the prey of every harpy in a world like this. He very quickly ran through his money, and through his friends. It is a strange thing, but true, that when you have plenty of money you are the jolliest fellow alive; but when you get knocked about a bit, have run through all your coin, and lost your credit, and your coat gets shabby, and your hat worn, then, those who used to think you such a charming chap, do not know you. They pass you by blindly, or cross to the other side of the street, and turn their eyes away lest you should accost them. Why? You cannot give them anything, and they have nothing for you. That is the world, and this poor fellow found it out. The result was he got exercised, and God spoke to him. He got to the end of his resources, and then God spoke to him, and he became deeply anxious about salvation. He was convicted of sin. He found out that he was a sinner. He had sinned against God. So have you and I. The sense of his sin rooted itself in his conscience,

and he thought the only thing he could do was to enter a monastery, so he walked hundreds of miles in order to get his guilty soul saved.

To that monastery he walked, begging his food on his way, and on the road became the perfect picture of misery. Unkempt, and ill-fed, he at length reached the monastery. The porter came in reply to his knock, and asked him what he wanted. "I want to see the Father Superior," he said. "Very well," said the porter, as he slammed the door in his face, and locked it. The Father Superior, a kindly old monk, went to the door. "Well, my son," he asked, "what do you want?" "My father," replied the young man, "I want you to let me in. I want to become an inmate of this monastery." "Why?" asked the old man. "I have lived an evil life," and then he told the story of his wicked life, "and now," he said at the finish, "I hope it is not too late. I hope I may be able to atone for my sins, and escape from the just judgment of God." The old man listened, and when he had come to the end of his story, he said, "My son, it is too late!" "Oh, father!" cried the young man, "let me in. I will do the most menial tasks, and will perform any penance you may order, so that I may atone for my sins." "My son, it is too late." "Oh, tell me not, it is too late!" said he. "My son, it is too late. All that you propose to do, has been done already by Another before you." The old man knew the gospel. He knew the love of Christ, and he told the young man the simple story of Christ, and of the cross, where the sinless Son of Man atoned for the sinner's sin. He told him of that which Paul brings out here,—"the righteousness of God,"—how the sinless Substitute had died in the room and stead of the

guilty sinner. He told him the story of the gospel, as I hope to tell it to you to-night.

Do not you "go about" trying to establish your righteousness! You are too late. The work has been done by Another, who has been here on earth, and who on the cross finished the work by which God has been glorified, and sin been put away. Jesus, the sinner's friend, has died for us, and nothing but His precious blood can wash away your sins. How foolish then are they who "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." What did the law bid me do? The law bade me be holy. I was not. The law bade me be righteous, and I was not. The law bade me love God with all my heart, and soul, and mind, and strength; but then I have not done it. It bade me love my neighbour as myself. I have not done it. Have you done it? Do you think you are going to get salvation in that way? You have a poor chance. Have you loved God with all your strength? Well! leave God out altogether. What about your neighbour? Have you loved him as yourself? I doubt it.

But you say to me, Are you saved? Yes, thank God, I am, but not on that ground. Not long since my next-door neighbour's house was on fire. It was late at night, and I was out, attending a patient, in a hotel near my residence. While seeing this gentleman, there was a knock at the door, and when I left the room, a waiter said to me, "Doctor, your house is on fire." Of course I ran downstairs, and out of the hall as quickly as I could, for my dear wife was very ill,

and I thought of her. When I got out I could see what I thought was the roof of my house all ablaze, and I can tell you my heart was in my mouth. As I ran up the hill some one met me and said, "It is not your house, doctor, but your neighbour's." "Thank God!" I exclaimed. Did I think of my neighbour as myself? I did not. That expression came out honestly enough. I was not sorry that it was not my house, though I was sorry for my neighbour. I could never get to heaven if it depended on loving my neighbour as myself.

My dear fellows, you will never get blessing in that way. Do not try that ground. The law may curse, but it cannot save you. Legal righteousness is a delusion Give up all thought of attempting yourself to repair the distance between your guilty soul and God. See how God has repaired it by Christ. See how God has repaired, and bridged over the chasm that sin has brought in, by the death of Jesus. "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which *doeth* those things shall *live* by them." The law only proposed to man long life on earth. The law never offered him eternal glory. No, the offer of eternal glory comes through the Son of God. The law proposed long life on earth; the gospel gives the believer association with the glorified Saviour, at the right hand of God. "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them." He shall live by them, if he continue to do them, and if he fail he must bear the penalty. That is just what Scripture says—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. xviii. 4). That means that the fathers should not die for the sins of the sons, nor the sons for the sins of

the fathers. Every man should die for his own sin. The man who sinned would be the man who died.

Now, the gospel proposes eternal life to those who, although they have sinned, and deserve to die, bow to the righteousness of God. "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise—Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above)." Why must I not say that? He has come down. Love brought Him down. Neither your, nor my prayer, nor cry brought Jesus down. I admit our necessity was before His eye, and His heart, but His love brought Him down from above to meet us. Nor say in thine heart, "Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead)." No, that will not do either; for He has already come up. He has come down in love, gone into death, and annulled it, and He has come up from among the dead. *Love* brought him down, and He has been taken up in *righteousness.* Do you see? Love and righteousness are the two things which appear in the gospel—the love of God, and the righteousness of God. These are the two foundations or pillars on which the whole superstructure of the gospel rests. It reposes upon these two wonderful pillars—the love, and the righteousness of God. Love gave the Son of God, and sent Him to earth to die in the sinner's stead, and righteousness raised Him, because He had glorified God infinitely in dying for sin, and the sinner.

Love and righteousness, which are the two great pillars of the Christian faith, are lacking, at least one or other of them is, in every other religion under the sun. You just inquire whether what I say be true

or not. You are surely well acquainted with the mythology of the heathen. Was there much holiness in it? You know pretty well that nearly all the gods of the Greeks and the Romans were deified lusts. Who was Bacchus? Who was Venus? You know they were but deified lusts. Holiness was not there. On the other hand, where was love? You get Jupiter, a thoroughly vengeful deity; and Mars, the god of war. These are but samples of the many gods of the heathen, in every case the creation, in men's minds, of what they thought God must be, and in their religion either love or holiness was lacking. If they allowed lust, they did not judge sin. If they judged sin, there was no love. Now the charm of the gospel of Christ is that, while God is Love, He is also Light; and while He judges sin unsparingly, He loves the poor sinner infinitely. Before the day of judgment has come, when He must judge sin eternally, and the unforgiven sinner bear the fruit and consequences of his sin, His own blessed Son has come into this scene, and in love has died on the cross. His work done, atonement made, and redemption accomplished, He has been raised from the dead in righteousness for our justification. The claims of God have all been met. God's righteousness and hatred of sin have been met in the judgment of the cross. "He who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." And now the worst sinner who looks to Jesus as his Saviour, is saved.

But what says this gospel? "The word"—the word of righteousness and the word of faith—"is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach." Is not that very

simple? A young man wrote me lately, saying he had been listening to many voices. I inquired what the voices were, and was told the voices of men; the mere outcome of the brains of men. And in this case these voices had led this young man into perfect agnosticism, which only brought sorrow and distress into his heart and conscience. Nihilism gives the affections nothing to feed on; God's gospel gives you Christ. Friend, you and I must listen to the voice of God, and when we listen we shall get the truth. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach." What says this word? "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Does anybody in this hall desire to be saved? Does any one in this meeting to-night really want to be saved? If you want to be saved, you may learn the simple truth how, and if the Word of God is to be believed, you may be saved now. God desires that you may be saved. If any one wants to be saved, let him listen. First of all, note God's two conditions to salvation—(1) "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus." I think that is difficult; for confession of the mouth does not, I judge, refer so much to getting up in a meeting like this and confessing Christ, as the walk day by day,—"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and (2) shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, *thou shalt be saved*." The second condition is very simple. I sometimes call this tenth of Romans "A simple gospel for simple souls." It is very simple indeed. If I had never been converted before, I think

I should be to-night. I think I should get it standing on this floor now. I see so clearly what the gospel, which I am to believe, is. The Son of God has come down into this scene, and died the just for the unjust, and, in dying, He has met the claims of God on me. He has gone to the cross, and He who knew no sin, was made sin for us, and has had laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. He was forsaken by God, that we might be accepted. He died for us. God has raised Him from the dead, and I see the effect of His death God-wards. It meets God's claims. The resurrection of Jesus is the demonstration that the claims of God have all been met by His death. Upon the treasury bench of heaven has been laid down the ransom-price of my redemption; I believe that in my heart, and know that I am saved.

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (vers. 9, 10). Mark it is first the heart, then the tongue. It is not head-work. That will not do here. It is all head work with zoology, geology, or physiology, but when you come to the knowledge of the Lord, it is heart-work. You have all got hearts, let Christ fill them. Think of His love—do you not believe that blessed One? Do you ask me if I believe? Yes, I believe Him from the bottom of my heart; I believe He loved me, as the apostle Paul says, "The Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). What is the result of knowing and believing that? The tongue is loosed. When a man's heart is touched, he believes, and then con-

fesses Christ. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." It is exceedingly simple. "Confession is made unto salvation." You get right with God first in your *heart*, and then put yourself right with men by your *mouth*. Your tongue exalts Christ. The man who is saved, tells of it to other people. He rejoices to speak of Christ's grace, and to Christ's credit. There is no credit to him. It is all to the glory of Christ.

You believe in Him with your heart, and with your mouth confession is made to salvation, for the Scripture says, "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." God does not suppose that the man who believes in His dear Son is going to be ashamed of Him, and if any of you have found the Lord as your Saviour, and have learned that His death has washed your sins away, and delivered you from judgment to come, do not be ashamed to confess Him. "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed" is a fine word. I do not think he need be ashamed. The man who has believed will never be put to shame; but for the man who has not Christ, there is nothing before him but dreadful shame. He will be ashamed of himself; ashamed that he missed the light; ashamed that when he had the chance to take Christ, he did not take Him. It is far better to be His now, and each of you may be, "for there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (vers. 12, 13).

Mark this verse with which I close, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?"

It is a very simple and a very blessed thing that, "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved;" but some put that off until too late. I admit, God may meet a man, as he did the poor fellow who dreamt he found Him as he fell from his horse, and broke his neck in falling—

> "'Twixt the saddle and the ground,
> I mercy sought, and mercy found,"

he tritely put it afterwards. If he called on the name of the Lord, he was certain of salvation; but do not you run away with the idea that you have a long time before you. Will you not call upon Him now? In the quiet of your chamber this night turn, and call on the Lord.

Believe on Him now, for you will not call unless you believe in Him, and you will not believe in Him unless you have heard of Him, and this you have. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (vers. 14, 15.) This is a beautiful circle. First of all God sends out the preacher; as the evangelist preaches, the sinner hears; as he hears he believes; the gospel of peace first goes into his heart, and then comes out of his mouth, and he says, "Lord, I believe." It is like touching the button of an electric bell, the circle is completed. I want the circle completed to-night. How is it to be completed? By simple faith, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

You just receive simply what the Lord has told you, and then the bell of your heart and lips will ring. The circle is completed. The Lord sends out the Word—the gospel of peace; you believe it; as you believe it, it works into your heart. You say, Lord, I believe; and then you confess Him to men, with your mouth, unto salvation.

The apostle adds here, "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Who hath believed our report?" And I ask you, Who has believed our report? What man in this room has believed the report of the Lord Jesus Christ? It is for you to say. The man who confesses with his mouth and believes in his heart is the wise man. Again let me repeat, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Have you faith in that blessed One, who died and rose again? If so, confess Him boldly.

CHAPTER XI.

A Jailor's Inquiry; or, Europe's First Convert.

(Acts xvi. 6–40.)

THERE is a peculiar interest attached to the scene before us, on this ground, that the Spirit of God records here the entrance of the gospel into Europe. No European should make light of such a weighty fact as that. It is a wonderful thing the gospel, because it is the revelation of God to men; moreover it brings men to God. And understand clearly, you do not know the gospel unless you know God, and unless you have been brought distinctly, and personally to God, so that your heart can rejoice in God, just as the poor jailor did. I think I had better call him "rich jailor" now, for indeed he was a wealthy man from that night onward.

This scene is one of the most beautiful in this way, that it shows that there is no limit to the grace of God. Europe was perhaps not more godless than other regions, but it was in heathen darkness, and wallowing in the squalor of sin, governed by Satan. If I may so speak, God says, I will begin at the bottom: I will begin with the very worst man I can find. Now, the man we looked at lately, Cornelius, was what you would call a good man; a prayerful, pious, almsgiving man; a benevolent man; but here

you have what would be called a downright, hardened servant of the devil. If there be a man here to-night who feels, I have served Satan thoroughly, my friend, you may get great hope from this chapter. The fact is there are none too bad for Jesus; but there are a great many people too good for Jesus. I have met scores of them; and there are some of that hoodwinked class in this hall to-night. They are too good for Jesus; they do not need salvation; they are not lost, hence they do not need Him. But here was a man who knew he was lost; but he was not too bad for Jesus.

Now see the way in which God brings grace to this needy man. We read in the verse which I commenced with, that Paul and his fellow-travellers "had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia." They were evidently pushing on to preach in the surrounding district when they "were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia." That is very remarkable; because, if they had been left to themselves, they would have been working in Asia, and they would not have crossed the water at all into Europe. But the Holy Ghost stops them. I believe, friends, in the leading of the Holy Ghost: I hope you do. I believe in the wonderful fact, that the Spirit of God, the third Person of the Trinity, is upon the earth. I never pray to God to send Him; I hope you do not either. I never ask the Lord to send the Spirit. Why? Because He *is here.*

That is the great truth in the Acts of the Apostles, that from the day of Pentecost onwards, the Holy Ghost had taken up His abode on earth in the Church. Our Lord announced this wondrous fact in John xiv., saying, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you

another Comforter, that he may *abide with you for ever*" (ver. 16). He came to do two things—to reveal the glory of Christ, and to minister blessing to those who believe; and in spite of the sin of the Church of God, the Spirit of God is here now. Sometimes people say to me, Why do you not pray, that the Spirit may come? Because I know that He is here. I pray that I may not grieve Him (Eph. iv. 30); I pray that He may not be quenched in the assembly (1 Thess. v. 19, 20); but I never ask—and I hope if you have done it hitherto, you will never do it again—for the Holy Ghost to come. He is here, and I will further add, that I believe the crying sin of Christendom is infidelity as to the presence of the Holy Ghost. That, however, is by the way.

The Spirit more than once forbade these dear servants of God to go in the direction they themselves thought to labour in, for "after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia, came down to Troas" (vers. 7, 8). This was a large mercantile city, a very important one too, from man's point of view, being populous, and opulent. While there, "a vision appeared to Paul in the night. There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us" (ver. 9). What a touching petition for an evangelist to hear, "Come over and help us!" Ah! it is a fine thing when a man knows that he needs help. "And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them" (ver. 10). A happy conclusion! A most blessed inference! A conclusion charged with the

deepest import for those who come before us in the after-part of the chapter.

Paul recognises that the Spirit had called him into an entirely new sphere, and over he goes into Macedonia. Thank God! he does go, and preach the gospel there. And now it has come to Edinburgh: I wonder if it has got into your heart; that is the point. The gospel is round about you in these days, but has it reached you? Are you a saved man yet? Ah! the Lord save you to-night, my friend; and if you have never known what His salvation is, may you know it to-night. I am not ashamed of the gospel. Why? It is the power of God unto salvation; and mark you, you cannot be saved by anything but the gospel; and you will be damned eternally if you do not receive the gospel.

Ah! you reply, I do not believe in damnation. I know you do not: you are one of a very large company, who will join hands with you in your infidelity, but that proves nothing. It is usually a multitude who run to do evil. But you may depend upon it, if man did not need salvation, God would never have sent His Son: He never would have sent the gospel. Therefore if I do not receive the gospel it is perfectly clear that there is nothing before me, but the righteous judgment of God in respect of sin. The point is this, man has sinned, and God will not make light of sin: we have all sinned, but before the day when He judges man's sin, God, in the most blessed grace, has sent His own Son into this scene to bear that sin, and sustain the judgment it demanded, that He might deliver the man who receives the gospel.

Here He sends Paul into Europe. I think his heart was immensely cheered that day, and that he said when

he got his message, Thank God! I have got a new field. Nothing warms my heart like the opening up of a new field for the gospel, and seeing God work in it. I know that many of you are, what is called "gospel-hardened"; but, still, it is the simple story of the gospel that you need. You have heard it all your days; but there is nothing for you but the old simple gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing will take you to glory but it. You may have science and learning, but these cannot take you to heaven. You may polish your acts up as you like, but they will never get you an entrance into the glory of God. I will tell you what will give you an entrance—the precious blood of the Son of God, shed on the tree for sinners: that is the gospel. I think you had better accept this gospel. God give to you, to receive it to-night!

I am quite aware that this blessed old gospel is nowadays quite out of date, and therefore I am not up to date at all; perhaps you have discovered that already. Be it so; I have no wish to be up to date, which simply means gilded infidelity as regards God's Word. I prefer to believe the Scriptures, and I want to go back, and to carry you back to the faith of the people, who first heard the good news, and received it; who enjoyed it; who lived on it; who lived for it, and who would have died for it, if God had called them to do so. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" (Rom. i. 16); so wrote the man whom we are reading about just now. Are you ashamed of it? I tell you, there is a day before you, when you will be ashamed that you were ashamed of it. Ashamed of Jesus! God forbid! You may be ashamed of yourself: I will go with you there. You may be

ashamed of your life, of your heart, of your ways and of your unbelief: I will go with you there. But ashamed of Jesus: God forbid! Nothing can reach your heart and fill it, except the gospel. It comes with the glad tidings of the love of God on the one hand, and the holiness of God, maintained in the cross of Christ, on the other hand. God's love is manifested in giving His Son, and the Saviour's love manifested in His death. By that death He met the righteousness of God; nay more, He bore our sins, that He might in righteousness deliver us. He has gone into death, and, by so doing, has annulled death, defeated the power of Satan, and delivered the believer.

Now, the Holy Ghost has come down to proclaim this. It is very good news to me; and you and I are in exactly the same position. You may think not, but it is the case. You are a poor sinner like me. You may have a little more money; you may have a little more learning; you may have a better status than I have; but when you are stripped of all these, and when you are revealed to yourself, as God sees you, you are a poor sinner in your sins. And that is what I was, and then Jesus saved me. And He wants to save thee. You had better let Him. You do not love the gospel! But the God of the gospel loves you; the Jesus of the gospel loves you; and the Holy Ghost, that proclaims the gospel, loves you, for "God is love." Hallelujah!

It was love, therefore, that sent up these men from Troas to Philippi; let us follow them. "Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis" (ver. 11). I think that is very interesting. As soon as the Spirit

of God came with the message to go to Macedonia, Paul and his companions went down to the harbour, and quickly found a vessel going to Europe. It was not a very long voyage, for they took only a day and a half. When on this gospel errand, they, so to speak, got a fair wind, and got over the distance in a day and a half; but, when they were coming back, it took five days: they then had contrary winds, I suppose (*see* Acts xx. 6). Ah! God loves to send peace to the anxious, troubled soul. God delights in that, and often gives His evangelists a fair wind, to carry the message of peace the quicker to the troubled soul. His keen eye and loving heart note every soul craving for light, pardon, and peace. Such is God.

Well, they got to Neapolis, the seaport for Philippi, which was about nine miles distant. And they went "from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days" (ver. 12). I suppose when they got to the city they looked for the man who had said, "Come over into Macedonia and help us!" I have no doubt Paul looked this way and that way, saying in his heart, "Where is the man who wants the gospel?" Are you the man, my friend, who wants the gospel? I am looking for my man to-night. Paul looked for his man, but he did not find him immediately. But we read, "And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by the river-side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither" (ver. 13). He could not find his man anywhere, but he found a lot of prayerful women. Thank God for the women that pray!

Women are often more earnest than men, and have

much less of the coward about them. Young man, you are afraid of being thought a Christian, while that young woman of your acquaintance is bold for Jesus. You know perfectly well, that if she were to try and speak to you about Him, you would try to get away: I know you would. Young men think they are fine fellows when they play the fool, drink, curse, swear, and blaspheme; and yet lots of them are the greatest cowards possible, and would blush ruby if they were requested to stand up for Christ, and own Him before their fellows. Do not I know it? Does not your conscience tell you that you are a moral coward, young man? Oh, you say, but what would the fellows in the class think of me? They would laugh at me. Well, I say, let them! I was a Christian before I became a medical student: I used to be studying for the law, I was going to be a lawyer; but when I became converted I did not think that the law and grace mingled very well, and so I went to medicine. That is the real truth. Where I was, studying in London in 1861, at first there was no young fellow-Christian: none of the students were on the Lord's side. And, you say, what did you do? Well, I tried to make them Christians; though, of course, I could not; but I spoke to them of Christ, and looked to God to bless them, and I am thankful, some of them turned to the Lord. Of course they made fine fun of me: they twitted me, and jeered at me; but I just turned to them, and said: "All right, my boys; you are welcome to your fun; but I am better off than you are, because I have got a Saviour, and you have not. I have salvation, and you have not." They soon gave me a wide berth.

If there is any one here to-night afraid of hoisting

his colours, I would like to tell him what an old Christian lady said to me. She has been a Christian for over fifty-two years, and as she sat this evening at my tea-table, she said, "Doctor, I think there is one thing we ought to do!" "And what is that, madam?" I asked. "We ought to be loyal to our colours." "That is exactly it," I said. First of all, my friends, get Christ; get to know Him, and then confess Him. Be loyal to your colours. Ah! but you say, I would not care to be seen at a prayer-meeting. No, you say, it is only fit for women. Thank God! for the women that pray, I say again. Thank God! for the praying mothers, praying sisters, and praying wives. I say this from the bottom of my heart, for when the Lord converted me, though I did not know it then, I found out afterwards that I was fairly netted in prayer. There were people praying for me all over the country, although I did not pray for myself. Others prayed for me, and there were a good many women amongst them. My dear old mother, who has gone to heaven since, prayed for me, and how glad she was when she heard that I was converted. And do you not think your mother would be glad if you were converted to-night, my friend? When mine read the letter that I sent, telling her that the Lord had saved me, I understand she wept for joy for three days even on: the tears rolling down her cheeks as she read again, and again, the letter, telling her that her youngest boy was turned to the Lord. When is your mother going to have that joy? When is she going to know that you are turned to the Lord?

At Philippi these women were praying, and let me tell you, I never knew much work going on without prayer; while, on the other hand, much work has often

been the fruit of the prayers of women. One of the most interesting revivals I knew, took place a few miles from here, and more than two hundred souls turned to the Lord. I found out afterwards, when I came to inquire, that three simple elderly women had met for nine long months, and had been praying to the Lord to send somebody into their district, to preach the gospel; and without my having any knowledge about it, the Lord said to me, You go and preach in that place. I never saw such a work before or since, and it was all due to these three women, who had been praying to God during those nine months. God always answers prayer. Fellow-Christians, pray on! You will get God's answer of blessing in due time.

"And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by the river-side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither." They had not much light, but they were anxious clearly, to get the gospel, and God's messengers very wisely sat down, and spake unto the women. I sometimes say, I think the gospel got into Europe in the character of an after-meeting. I mean, in what should be the character of an after-meeting. There was no preaching. I do not find that either Paul, or Luke, or Silas preached. They "sat down and spake unto the women." Do you know, if you Christian young men were to go in a little more for that conversational evangelising, you would be amazed at what would be the outcome. I was talking to a young man coming to the meeting to-night. He has only been converted six weeks, and he said to me, "Doctor, I think we who are turned to the Lord, ought to be showing our light." "Yes, certainly," I replied. "And do you not think we

should try to turn others about?" "Most surely," I answered. "Well," he said, "it strikes me that Christians do not do that very much." I replied: "You are quite right. We should bear testimony to other people, but I am afraid we are too much inclined to relegate our testimony to other people,—people called preachers,—and think that it is their duty alone to do so." But that is not so; if you know Christ and love Him, you will tell anybody you know about Him. That is the way to spread the gospel, and it is wonderful how it will spread.

"They sat down, and spake to the women." Here there was a simple colloquial unfolding of the truth. No doubt, that is what took place, and what was the result? "A certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul" (ver. 14). This earnest woman had her heart opened. It is a great thing when the heart is opened: what do you think takes place when the heart is opened? The Lord gets His right place there. "And when she was baptized"—she publicly owned the Lord—"and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there; and she constrained us" (ver. 15). Well done, Lydia! There is a nice woman for you. She is not afraid to identify herself with the Lord. She is the first in Europe to do so. I believe, in Lydia you have the first convert to Christ, in Europe. She identifies herself with the Lord's servants. First of all, her heart is opened, and then the next thing is her house is opened. Is your house used for the Lord? If so, it is a very happy thing.

If you do not use your house for the Lord, even though it be but one room or two, I do not think He has got a very big place in your heart. What can I do? You can take in some servant of the Lord—not necessarily to stop with you—nor does it imply that you require to be able to extend hospitality. The thought is this: I mean to identify myself thoroughly with the work of the Lord. Lydia was a genuine woman: would that every man who hears me were as earnest and real.

And now I read, "And it came to pass, as we went to prayer"—the prayer-meeting was kept up—"a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying; the same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour" (vers. 16-18). Why did the apostle Paul do that? may I ask. Why does he refuse the testimony of this deluded girl? She was simply a servant of the devil: she was possessed by the spirit of Python. Satan was governing her absolutely, although she went after them day by day, crying, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." Why would Paul not accept this testimony? The fact was simply this; he was spiritual enough to recognise that this was the devil trying to get his hand into the work of God; the devil, in plain language, was going to patronise the work of Christ, and that would not do at all.

I daresay, some of us, had we been followed about by that girl, crying, "These are servants of the most high God," might have thought that we were doing pretty well; and we would have been tempted to accept her help. But the devil can never help the work of God. Satan wanted to get his hand in, so that he might frustrate the work of the Spirit of God. Paul, however, says to the spirit, "Come out of her." It was Satan in his deadly opposition to the gospel, endeavouring to spoil the work. There are two principles you find all through Scripture—they are corruption and violence. In the garden of Eden the devil corrupts Eve; and what is the next thing? Cain slays Abel, *i.e.*, violence. It is the same in the scene before us. Satan tries to corrupt God's work, before Paul develops it. When Paul refuses the devil's help, note the change in his tactics. Satan tries to crush the servants of God, and violence comes out.

"And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market-place unto the rulers" (ver. 19). The fact is, if you want to touch a man of the world most effectually, the spot to touch is his pocket. There is scarce a man here to-night, but can be touched through his pocket. These men were touched there, for when Paul commanded the spirit, he came out of the girl. She was, in fact, delivered from the power of the devil, and that is what you want, my friend. I do not say you want to be delivered in exactly the same way. You may say you have no spirit of divination, which I quite admit, but nevertheless it is a solemn truth that the man who is not under the power of the gospel, is under the power of Satan. When Paul was converted, the Lord commanded him

to go to the Gentiles, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts xxvi. 18). Therefore you see that, until you and I are brought to Jesus, we are in Satan's power. I frankly admit that men do not like to own it. I know I did not care to own it, nor would I have owned it when I was unconverted, but I own now where I was till Christ delivered me.

But here was a woman completely under the power of the devil, and when she is delivered from it by the power of the Holy Ghost, there arises a storm. Her masters "caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market-place, unto the rulers, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city" (ver. 20). All sorts of false accusation are made; they do not get a fair hearing; their clothes are rent off them, and after that they are beaten. "And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks" (vers. 23, 24).

I have no doubt the devil thought, I have put a stop to the gospel now. I have put a conclusion to the work of the Lord, now that I have got His servants shut up. Do you know when grace wins its finest victories? In the moment when everything seems against God, and against His servants. There was a victory to be won on this occasion; but the way to it was painful. The man whom Paul had seen in vision was in the precincts of that Roman prison. God had His eye upon him, and he must be got at

somehow. He was not likely to come out to hear the gospel, so Satan, in attempting to stop its course, is made to carry it in to him.

The apostles are thrust into the inner prison, and their feet are put in the stocks. The jailor seems to take a brutal pleasure in his treatment of them. He does not say, "Come along; I am sorry I must lock you up;" but apparently serving his then master gleefully, he "thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks." Then, clearly, he went to get a sleep. "And at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them" (ver. 25). What a wonderful thing is faith! Look at the faith and energy of these servants of God. Think of their condition with bleeding backs, and cramped limbs, in that damp, miserable, wretched dungeon of a prison. The prisons which the Romans prepared for their prisoners were awful places. And yet, if you had been passing by that old prison, I think you would have stopped, with the question, What is that I hear? Why, they are having a really good time of it in there! Singing, do I hear? They seem to be very happy! What has happened? They seem uncommonly well off in that prison. True, they were profoundly happy, hence they "prayed and sang praises." Ah! you cannot crush or shut up the heart of a man that has Christ in it. You cannot spoil his joy. Do not you see that the Holy Ghost always brings joy to the heart of the persecuted? Persecution does not damp joy: the very contrary, the more men persecute you, the brighter will you get. A little persecution would brighten us up wonderfully, my friends. I could not find a better illustration of that than is found here.

Now what do you think was the burden of those midnight prayers? I do not think their prayer was, "Lord, let us out." I believe their prayer to God was, "Lord, turn this to Thy glory; turn this to the salvation of souls; turn this to the blessing of precious souls in this prison; and, O Lord! keep those who have believed, and especially Lydia, keep them firm." Besides they sang. Songs ascended to God in the night seasons. Had it been you and me, my friend, I am not sure we should have been like Paul and Silas. We should probably have turned to each other, and said: "This is a very blue look-out indeed. Instead of going on with the preaching, here we are in prison." Indeed, we are very wishy-washy Christians nowadays, I fear; but look at the sturdiness of these men; look at their boldness and confidence in God. It is lovely.

But not only did God hear their prayers and songs, for we read, "and the prisoners heard them." I think I can hear the others saying amongst themselves, "Uncommon kind of prisoners these; poor chaps, they came in just a short time ago, and they had an awful beating outside; now their feet are in the stocks. Still, here they are, praying and singing, as if they were in a palace, instead of a prison." They were doubtless a great enigma to their fellow-prisoners, but they were simply acting as holy priests, just as they acted as royal priests a little later in the night. A Christian is a most remarkable person. He is indeed a wonderful man. He is a holy priest, and a royal priest. What do you mean by a holy priest? you ask. He has the privilege of offering the sacrifice of praise to God: and as a royal priest, he has something for other people. He holds up one hand to God in praise; he is a worshipper. In the

other, he holds out to the poor and needy that which he has to give them; he is a benefactor. (*See* Heb. xiii. 15, 16, and 1 Pet. ii. 5-9.) The Christian is the most independent creature under the sun, as regards man, but hangs on God. He has salvation through the blood of the Son of God; he knows God; and he is here to witness for God. I wish I were a little more of the backbone Christian myself, for in this scripture I read how unlike myself were these men.

Here then they were sending up their music to God; and what a sight for heaven that must have been! The servants of heaven's Lord were shut up in prison by the devil, but he could not shut their lips, so they prayed, and sang praises to God, and the prisoners heard them.

That God heard them is blessedly manifest, for we read, "And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loose." God steps in, and the prison is shaken to its very foundations at His command. This was God's answer to the prayer of His servants. It was God's tribute to the cheerful song of His beloved witnesses: it was God's testimony to the name of His blessed Son. I do not think it was the earthquake that converted the jailor. There were two great quakes that night. The earthquake woke up the jailor, as you will see presently, from his slumbers; the second, which I had better call a soul-quake, woke him as to his state before God. It was not the physical danger that did that. God steps in: the old prison is shaken to its foundations; the doors are opened, and the bands are loosed. That is a sort of figure of what the gospel does; I will tell you, it produces

a moral earthquake in a man. When you get under the power of the gospel, you collapse. You are laid hold of by God, and reduced to nothingness. A man told me not long ago: "I was in a meeting last night, where you were preaching about the precious blood of Christ, and it just seemed as though God laid hold of me, and brought me down, down, down; till I got down to the very dust in the sense of my sin, and guilt, and danger before God." It is the same principle here. It is a wonderful thing when God deals with a man; when you have the sense in your soul that the eye of God is upon you.

"And every one's bands were loosed." That is what the gospel does. It comes out, and sets the captives free. Emancipation is emblazoned on the flag of the gospel. Emancipation for the captive, the slave of Satan. That is what I get in this chapter: and the first thing is everybody is loosed from their bands. Have you received the gospel? Will you be the Lord's to-night?

"And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled" (ver. 27). The jailor is awakened. He became conscious that the doors were open. In a minute he says to himself, They are all gone; my life is forfeited. He draws his sword, and is about to commit suicide. He knows that his life will be taken in the morning, for that was the Roman law. If a jailor allowed a prisoner to escape, he had to forfeit his life for that of the man he had allowed to escape. Historians tell us that Philippi was the most wonderful place for suicides. It was quite the fashion, and this poor man was about to launch him-

self into eternity. Is there a wretched sinner, a would-be suicide here to-night? Ah, friend! are you fit to go into the presence of God? Can you go into God's presence, above all, with the sin of self-destruction upon you? Is there a man here—I have sometimes met them—who has determined to hurl himself into eternity, as this poor wretch was going to do? Stop! man, are you fit to go into the presence of God? No, you are not fit, unless you are saved.

Just as this man's sword touches his breast-bone there comes out from the darkness a loud voice. The voice of a royal priest utters these wonderful words, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here" (ver. 28). That woke the jailor up. It was not the earthquake that produced the state of exercise in his soul, that you read of. It was the word from the lips of the royal priest, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." He would ask himself, no doubt, How in the world could he know I was going to commit suicide? Here it is thick darkness, yet he has seen me. The Spirit of God was the Author of that word. "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." You, who are going on your way to eternal ruin, do you know what God says to you? You, sinner, who are going on in your own way, sporting with the things of this life, and turning your back upon Christ, do you know what He says by my lips to-night? "Do thyself no harm." That is just what man is doing. The jailor heard the voice, and we read, "Then he called for a light." Is that not very striking? When a man is touched by the Spirit of God, he always wants a light. I like to see the man who wants God's light. You know what light does? It makes things manifest. True, this man called for a physical light; but do you not want

spiritual light? If you do, you will get it. The jailor had the physical, and desired spiritual light, and he got it.

He was just at the doorway, and he "sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas; and brought them out." And at that moment there burst from the lips of the awakened man, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Who had said a word to him about salvation? Who had said a word to him about his sins? Who told the man that he was lost? Who pressed upon him the necessity for salvation? God can do a wonderful work in a very short time; and even this night, since you came into this meeting, I trust He has wrought in your souls, to make you feel that you need salvation. "What must I do to be saved?" is a wonderful query. He had received light from God, and the first discovery in his soul was this, I am a lost man; and so he cried, "What must I do to be saved?"

Have you ever taken your place before God with a query like that? Have you—let me affectionately ask you—ever put such a query as that? Have you ever, in the presence of God, asked, "What must I do to be saved?" If you have not, I believe the truth is that you have not discovered what the jailor discovered, that you are a lost soul. Oh! may God show you that you are a lost sinner, and give you grace to turn to Him with a similar query; that is to get light, and knowledge, and salvation. "What must I do to be saved?" is the sinner's inquiry. How beautiful is God's answer! "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." How charming is that answer! Was he to do some great thing? No! He was to believe the good news

of the love of God, made manifest in His precious Son. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." There was not one word about works; works come in, in their proper place: there is no doubt about that,—in the history of the Christian. But you do not work in order to be saved. As the hymn puts it—

> "I would not work my soul to save,
> For that my Lord has done;
> But, I would work like any slave,
> For love of God's dear Son."

What works could you do, sinner? As a careless sinner, you bring forth "wicked works"; and as a religious unconverted man you can only bring forth "dead works." Both wicked and dead works must be judged of God. Not to him that worketh, but "To him that *worketh not*, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. iv. 5), is God's way of salvation, and that the jailor heard that night.

But what did this jailor know about the Lord Jesus Christ? Till then nothing, so "they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." The Lord Jesus Christ he was bade to believe on. His full name was given. Why was it not believe on Jesus; or believe on Christ? It was the Lord Jesus Christ he was to know: He was the Lord; the Lord of all. Is He not your Lord? If not, oh! let Him have dominion over you in future. He was also Jesus! What does that mean? Jehovah, the Saviour! "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." And further, He was the Christ, the anointed One, the exalted One.

But this was not all the jailor heard, for by the

statement, "they spake unto him the word of the Lord," I have no doubt, Paul brought out the tale of the birth of Jesus, and of His holy, gracious life; the story of His death on the cross when men put Him there; and how at that moment, was accomplished the work of redemption, which He only could accomplish; and how God laid upon Him the iniquity of us all; how He who knew no sin, was made sin for us; and how, after His suffering was ended in His atoning death, and the shedding of His blood, He was laid in the grave for three days. How that after the third day He was raised from the dead, and was received up into glory at the right hand of the Father. I think Paul told him more than that. He told him that, after Jesus had gone to the right hand of God, the Holy Spirit came down to testify of Him, to proclaim forgiveness of sins in His name, and to seal the faith of the believer.

This, then, is the answer to your question: if you want to be saved, you must believe on God's Son. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Mark you! it is Christ, you must know. It is the Person of Christ who is the object of belief, the object of faith. Christ, personally, is the object of the soul's faith, and the one who believes in Him gets the benefit of all the work He has done. I do not agree at all with an old woman, in Arran, who said to a friend of mine, who was pressing the gospel on her, "You make far o'er muckle o' that word, believe, believe." That let out a great deal. You cannot make too much of believing. If Christ has not hitherto been the object of your faith, may God give you now to believe on His blessed Son, and you will get what the jailor got.

"Thou shalt be saved," is God's assurance to the believing soul.

The moment you turn to Christ, the moment you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that moment you get salvation. The moment the sinner accepts Him, acknowledges Him, and confesses Him, that moment is salvation the present, and eternal portion of the believing one. You get what the jailor got. He got salvation; for, I find: "And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, *believing in God with all his house*" (vers. 33, 34). He was told to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and I read he believed in God. Why was that? What he had heard led him to see that the blessed Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom he had been told, was really God; that the blessed One, who became Man, that He might die for his sins, and save him, was the eternal, blessed Son of God. Accepting that truth, and believing that truth, in the simplicity of a little child, he believed in God "with all his house." Mark that! Not only he himself, but all his house were marked for blessing. Paul had found his man, but he got a good many besides.

Truly this is a charming scene. The first man converted in Europe is just a sample of what God's grace is still doing. Look at the contrast—at one moment the slave of Satan, and in the very pay of the enemy. One moment doing the devil's work, as he thrusts the Lord's servants into the prison, and makes their feet fast in the stocks; and the next he is suddenly awakened—awakened by God—and is about to hurl himself into eternity, when he hears a

word that arrests him, and he cries, as a lost man, "What must I do to be saved?" He hears the gospel, believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, confesses the name of the Lord, and then identifies himself with the work of the Lord. He is a saved man, a trophy of grace, indeed. A wonderful trophy was that man—do you resemble him at all?

The next morning the magistrates sent to him, saying, "Let those men go," and he came and said to Paul, "The magistrates have sent to let you go; now therefore depart, and go in peace" (ver. 36). What a change between the way he received the Lord's servants, and the way he dismissed them. Indeed, a wonderful change comes over a man when the gospel is received, and the jailor knew it full well as he said "Go in peace," the very words his Lord and Saviour had often used to others.

My friends sometimes talk about transformation scenes. I think this is one of the finest transformation scenes. The man has been a servant of Satan till that hour. In a moment he is transformed. He comes out, and is identified with the Lord's interests, and he takes up this position, while discharging his daily duties as a jailor.

You say that you are converted, and yet there has been no change in your life. I doubt very much if you have been converted, if there is no change in your life. Converted! What are you converted to, if your ways, your habits, and your manners are unchanged. Converted! No, no. Whenever God is working, Satan has a number of false converts about, in order to spoil the work. Ah! says some one, that is what upsets me. I do not think I shall ever make any profession, because those

who do so do not walk differently. I do not think there is any reality in conversion. Why? Because you think some people inconsistent. Do not let that upset you. If the Spirit of God were not making real, genuine converts, the devil would not make false converts in order to spoil the work. Do not you be a false convert. Do not you profess what you do not possess. But if you know Christ, own Him boldly, hoist your colours, and confess Him.

The Lord give you to be on His side from this night forward, and not ashamed to confess the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour.

CHAPTER XII.

A Rich Man's Perplexity; or, "What shall I do?"

(Mark x. 17-52.)

THERE is a very striking contrast, in this scripture, between the question of the young man to the Lord, "What shall I do?" (ver. 17), and the question of the Lord, to the poor blind man at the close of the chapter, "What wilt thou that I should do?" (ver. 51.) You do not read in this gospel, that the first questioner was a young man; but in the corresponding narrative, given to us in the Gospel of Matthew (xix. 20), we read that it was a young man, who came to Jesus with this deeply important question.

The young man was a ruler, and he was rich; but, ruler though he were, and rich also, the question of the possession of eternal life had not been settled satisfactorily in the history of his soul. Clearly, he was an earnest young man. It is a nice thing to see an earnest young man, and this one was distinctly so. He was running: "There came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" (ver. 17.) Clearly, he thought of eternal things. Evidently the question crossed his mind as to how eternal life was

to be obtained. He had it not; he wished it. He wanted it, and desired, seriously, and earnestly, to know how he was to get eternal life.

Now, I trust there is a young man here—perhaps more than one—who really desires to know how to get eternal life; but, I do not doubt, that, till our eyes are thoroughly opened to see where we are, the same kind of question as this rich young man put to the Lord, would be put by us. He says, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Do you suppose that eternal life is to be inherited by doing? We have all thought so, at some time. But, some one says, does not the Lord answer him, and bid him do certain things? No doubt He does; but, it is just like this, the Lord, when this young man comes to Him, says, as it were, I will find out what you are prepared to do. And what comes out is this —he was not prepared to do that which would have given him eternal life, had it been obtained by doing. That is clear. In reality, he was tested; the Lord took him on the ground upon which he came to Him. And so will the Lord do now. I believe He takes us all at first upon the ground upon which we have accosted Him.

This ruler came to Jesus, apparently in immense earnestness, for he ran, and knelt to Him. Have you ever knelt to Jesus yet? to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God? I do not mean as a form, but with a sense in your heart that there was an immense need, which only He could meet. "He kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" It was a most important question. No more important question could fall from his lips, and I am sure the Lord took a deep

interest in him, for we read, "Jesus beholding him, loved him" (ver. 21). Beautiful words, "He loved him!" I have no doubt there were moral features, and natural characteristics in this young man, that would make him a most desirable friend, and desirable companion. There was a fervour, an earnestness, a genuineness, and simplicity about him, that was charming, and, looking on his mere natural qualifications, the Lord "loved him."

But, he came with this thought, you see, that he must "do" something. We have all thought similarly. When we think of possessing eternal life, the first thought always is, "What shall I do?" The Lord immediately replies, "Why callest thou me good?" He does not answer his question straight; He puts another question to him, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God." That ought to have smitten his conscience at once with the sense, if there be none good but one, I am not that one, and therefore I cannot do any "good thing." Another gospel tells us that he said: "Good Master, what *good thing* shall I do?" (Matt. xix. 16.) Do you think you can do any good thing? I sometimes hear men talking about being better; nay, I have even heard them sometimes talk about "doing their best." What folly!

The Lord Jesus Christ says here, "There is none good but one, that is, God." And Scripture says, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." Here Christ asks, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God." I think the Lord gave him the opportunity of saying, "But thou art God." Had he really known, and clearly discerned the Person of Jesus, he would immediately have said,

"Thou art God." But, I take it, he saw no more in Christ than that He was a teacher of religion, hence when the claims of the Lord on him are presented to him, he does not rise to them. He could not, so he turned away sorrowfully.

First of all, the Lord says to him, since he came on the ground of doing, "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery." There are men in this hall to-night, who could truthfully say, I never did that. Perhaps there are some here who have committed it. Well, let even the adulterer learn this, that Christ can forgive him that sin, and the blood of Jesus can wash out that awful moral stain upon the soul. "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and thy mother." The Lord presents to him that table of the law which bears specially on his neighbour, and what he was to his neighbour. Then he says, "Master, all these have I observed from my youth." That is, his outward conduct toward man had been perfect. But, my friend, let your conduct be never so perfect outwardly before man, that does not put you right before God. That does not fit your soul for God; and this young man felt he was not right before God.

"Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me" (ver. 21). He had a deep interest in him. I love to think that the Lord has a deep interest in every young man in this hall to-night. I may go further, and say, He loves you. Whether you love Him is another question. I do not think

you have loved Him, until you have found out that He loves you. "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John iv. 19). The heart of Jesus was deeply interested in this apparently anxious young man, this thoroughly anxious inquirer. "Then Jesus beholding him loved him." Your conduct has been beautiful, He seems to say, but "one thing thou lackest."

Matthew's gospel tells us, that when the Lord had put the details of the law before him, he replied, "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" (xix. 20.) He himself, conscious of deficiency, propounds the question, "What lack I yet?" I will tell you what he lacked. He lacked the real knowledge of Christ, and, my friend, if you have not Christ, no matter how beautiful and moral your life may be, you lack everything. Let a man have and be what he may in this world, if he do not possess Christ, he lacks everything really worth having. The man who is not right about Christ, is wrong about everything else; be certain of that. The man who is right about Christ will be the man right about most things; but the man who is not right about Christ, is wrong about everything.

The Lord knew his condition, and expressed it in the words, "One thing thou lackest." And what was lacking? Attachment to Himself. You have not attached yourself to Me, and there are certain things in the road which hinder you so doing. "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me." No man likes to take up the cross. First of all, do not you see what a difference it would make in this life? He was something in this life, because a rich

man is always thought more of than a poor man; every one knows that. Far more is usually thought of the student that has heaps of money, than of the man who has only enough to pay his lodgings, and his class fees. We know that perfectly well. We know what men are, and riches are distinctly obstacles in the road of blessing.

But I pray you to carefully note that I do not think the Lord desires to teach you or me here, that eternal life is to be got by our giving up earthly things; that is not the way the gospel speaks. The gospel does not say we must give up in order to get. No, men are "turned *to* God *from* idols," as Scripture says (1 Thess. i. 9); and turned to know Christ through grace, and possess Him; then, as they possess Him as their Saviour, what they are engaged in drops from them as autumn leaves. The reason why the Lord presented the truth as He did in this narrative, was because the young man came upon the ground of doing. He, so to speak, says, I must test you, whether you are prepared to do that which will at least put you on the way of getting eternal life. "Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor;" because, observe, he took the ground of loving his neighbour.

There are two tables of the law. The first is that summed up in, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind" (Luke x. 27). And the other table is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Had he loved his neighbour as himself? He had not committed adultery; he had not murdered; he had not stolen; he had not borne false witness; he had not defrauded; and he had honoured his father and his mother. He was most estimable; but did he

love his neighbour as himself? Certainly not. Why? Because he was wealthy. If he had loved his neighbour as himself, he could not have been wealthy.

Let us take an illustration! If I have got £1,000, and I love my neighbour as myself, I shall give him half of it. I cannot keep it to myself. I love him as myself. I must give him a share equal with myself. But, you ask, where would that land you presently? Just where the Lord would have this young man land. I have £1,000; I see my neighbour, who has not so much. If I love him as much as myself, then I go and hand him over £500. I have got £500 left, but again I see another neighbour without any, and I give him the £250; but there is another neighbour whom I see, who gets the £125, and so on. Why, you say, you will be stripped. That is the point. The Lord does not take a long time in reaching it. He says to the rich youth, If you mean to get eternal life on that ground, you go right away, and sell all you have, and give it to the poor; and thus illustrate the principle of the man who loves his neighbour as himself. Further, you will then have got rid of that which is a hindrance to your coming after Me.

Alas! he loved his money more than his soul. He loved his riches more than eternal life. He loved more, what he had got, than what he might have got—that is, Christ. The test was too great. What was he told? "Come, take up the cross, and follow me." What does the Lord mean by this? I am the rejected Saviour. Do not you shut your eyes; let no man delude, or deceive himself. It is a rejected Saviour that is preached to-day. Jesus is not popular. He could not be. The cross is not popular. It could not be. Oh no! "Take up the cross, and follow me," was a

hard saying, although coupled with "and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." He had treasures on earth, and they entangled his heart. What do we then find? "He was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions" (ver. 22). He said to himself, I cannot part with my money, my being something on earth, even though promised blessing in heaven, so he "went away grieved." He was simply tested; and I believe we all get tested. I have been tested, and you will have to be.

But if there be one here to-night who wants eternal life, do I tell you, that you have to give up everything to get eternal life? I do nothing of the sort. That is not the gospel. The incident of this young man is a good illustration of the sad fact, that man is wrapped up in what makes much of himself, and further that he will not drop the thing that is seen, and temporal, for what is unseen though eternal. He will not give up the present things, seen and temporal, for what is unseen and eternal. The young man loved his money better than Christ; he loved what he had got better than what he might have got. He loved the bounties Providence had given him, and he clung to earth, to its wealth, to the things of time. He was as near salvation as you are to-night, but alas! he missed it. Do not you miss it. He was very near getting it; when coming to the feet of the Saviour, and hearing Him say, "Come, and follow me." What is His answer? No, I cannot do that. He goes away with a sad heart. He kept his money, and his lands, but he parted with Christ, and, as far as Scripture tells us, never met Him again. I gravely question whether you and I, if we be found in everlasting glory, with treasure there, by-and-by, will find that young man there.

Mark what the Lord says now: "Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished." Then again he says: "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?" (vers. 23-26.) That is a grave question, "Who then can be saved?" If these earthly things come in as such insuperable difficulties, who can be saved? Let me reply. You may be saved if you will have salvation in God's own way. If you are going on the tack of doing good, so as to give God a meritorious reason why He should bless you, then you will never get it. If you take the place which the man in the end of the chapter takes when he comes to Jesus in his need, you will have it.

You will have been struck with the contrast between the rich man who comes and asks, "What shall I do?" and the man in the end of the chapter, the poor blind beggar, to whom Jesus says, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" What a difference between the "What shall I do?" of the sinner to the Saviour, and the "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" of the Saviour to the sinner. Who can be saved? Any one who lets Jesus save him; any man who will let Jesus play the Saviour's part,—that is the man who will be saved. If you have not been saved, why not? Do not you want to be saved? Are you not desirous of being saved? The disciples may anxiously inquire, "Who then can

be saved?" What is the answer,—Every one who takes his place as one incapable of doing that which will save himself; and, who feels that he cannot earn eternal life for himself; and, who will draw from the Saviour's grace, and fulness, and goodness. You come to Jesus; you heed the lovely voice that calls you, and come to Him, and you will have treasure in heaven. Who can be saved? The man who hears the voice of Jesus, comes to Him, trusts Him, and gets all that His blood can purchase for him, and all that the Saviour's heart can minister to Him. The man who will let Jesus bless him, that is the man who will be saved.

"Who then can be saved?" the disciples exclaimed in wonder. "And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible." You ask, What does that mean? It is not possible for you and me to be saved by our own efforts. Why is it impossible? Because we are sinners, and cannot save ourselves. How can you meet the claims of God in righteousness? You must be more than a man to do that. You may think your case is not a bad one. It is not the verdict of the sinner as to his own condition that settles it. You are no judge of your case. God has judged you, and me, to be sinners in our sins, lost, and undone. He has judged us to be what we are, incapable of extricating ourselves from the condition in which sin has landed us; and, the thing which is not possible with us, is possible with Him. "Who then can be saved?" said the disciples. Well, says Christ, "with men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." Whom then am I cast back upon? I am cast back upon God. How

can you be saved? You must let God save you. You must bow down before God, and let Him save you. You say, How? It is very simple. It is by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is by the atoning work of the Saviour. There is no other way.

At this point Peter broke in, and said, "Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee." I think it was rather a pity that Peter said that, but the Lord's reply amounts to this: "You have made a very good thing by it. It is a good thing for you that you did, Peter." Indeed, it is quite true. If you have left all, and followed Jesus, you have made a good thing by it. You have not really lost anything. What have you lost? He says, "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's"—(see how beautifully he personifies the gospel)—"but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (vers. 29, 30). There is a string of blessings for you, with persecution, if you stand for Christ. I never knew a man, who stood for Christ, who did not get into trouble.

When I was a student myself I got plenty of roasting. There was no Christian Association, and there were no Christians among the men in the college, that I knew of, at least, at first. There were plenty of fellows on the world's side, and they gave me a good deal of the petty persecution that godless men can furnish a young disciple of Christ with. I got my share of it, and it was a first-class thing for me. It kept me humble and clinging to Christ. Do not you be afraid of a little persecution. It will do you far

more good than a little flattery. Depend upon it, this is true. The man who gets persecuted, and by grace is enabled to walk in lowliness, and to remain true to Christ shows that his conversion is genuine, and his faith real. Persecution will do him good.

A good many young men are like Jonathan, when he did not fully follow David. They do not stand for the Lord. They escape persecution, but they escape more than that. They escape the support of Christ; they escape the enjoyment of the love of Christ; and they escape the privilege of being a witness for Christ. Here we are to enjoy His salvation, "with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

Well, now, have you left anything for Christ? I recollect perfectly well about three weeks after I was converted in London, that an old servant of God came to me, and said, "I hear you have been converted recently." "Yes, sir," I said. Then he told me to follow the Lord fully, and quoted these two verses (29, 30). I did not see him again for many long years, but, twenty years afterwards, I reminded him of the scriptures he had given me when I had been a Christian but three weeks. "And was what I quoted true?" he asked. "I daresay you have got some persecution for the Lord's sake, but have you not proved His support?" I could only say how true were the words of my Lord, and to you let me commend them. I found the blessing of the Lord upon everything. I found myself outside the world, but in the family of God. I found myself to be a brother to all who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. I found I had ten thousand unknown brethren. As it is put here, "Ye shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren." If you follow the Lord

you will find yourself among the people of God, amongst those who will take a deep interest in you.

I must bear witness to the truth of the principle, which the Lord unfolds here, that, the man who leaves anything for Christ, and for the gospel's sake, is compensated for it by the Lord. The Lord also sustains him in the enjoyment of His own heavenly blessings as he passes through this scene. If there be a young fellow here desirous to follow the Lord, be encouraged, my friend, to do so. You will never regret decision for Christ, nor discipleship in following Him.

What follows is very interesting. The Lord was going up to Jerusalem, to die; and He tells the disciples, as they were going up, what things were to happen. He went before them, and I doubt not the disciples were very much astonished at the Lord going out of their company, and going ahead. They followed and were afraid. Then He took them apart and showed them the things that should happen to Him. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death." If you and I are to live, Christ, the holy man, upon whom death had no claims, must go into death; and here He unfolds, in the most distinct way, that there is no way into the glory of God, except through His own death. There is no way to get eternal life but through His death. If we are to possess eternal life, it is not by any doing on our part. It is by His dying. The Jews, He says, "shall deliver him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again." He was rejected of the Jews then, and He is

a rejected Saviour still, for Christ is as much rejected in the nineteenth century as when He spoke these words. You stand for Christ, believe on Him, and be a man for Christ, and you will find this out. But what will He give you? His support. It is such joy to be on the Lord's side. It is a blessed, and a wonderful thing, to be on the side of the rejected Saviour.

But in the moment when men rejected Him, He in love gave Himself for them. He died, and His work accomplished, He has gone to the right hand of God, where He is now glorified. There He sits; but He is the same Jesus to-night, as when He passed Bartimæus that day, in the chapter before us,—the same tender Saviour, though now in glory. Get you to the feet of that risen, ascended, victorious Saviour, and let Him bless you. If you want Him, you will find Him just as did the blind man. There he was, poor fellow, sitting by the wayside. He heard of Jesus, and so have you to-night. He was sitting there, hoping to get a little money, and, as he heard the crowd approach, I have no doubt, he said to himself, "I shall have a prosperous day, and get a good deal of money from this passing multitude." But he was curious to know the meaning of that crowd. He was told, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." No doubt he had heard of His miracles, and of how He had opened other men's eyes, and he concluded He could open his.

In a minute the filling of his purse, and the getting of money are forgotten, and his voice rings over the crowd: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." That is what he says. The people said: "Hold your peace, be quiet; do not make a noise. Do you think He will stop for you?" But we read, "He cried the

more, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." And that voice of need falls on the Saviour's ear, and touches His heart, and Scripture says, "Jesus stood still." He was on His way to Jerusalem to perform the wonderful work of the cross, of which I have spoken, but the cry of need arrested Him. He is now in heaven, in glory, but, the voice of need touches Him now, just as the voice of misery and need touched Him then. "Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they called the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee."

And what do we then find? "And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus." The thing that hindered him, he cast away. Picture to yourself that blind man, sitting by the roadside, with the people all around him. When his cry is heard he felt, If I am going to get to Him through that crowd, I must cast off my garment—it will but hinder me; and so he cast away his garment. He got rid of the thing that hindered him. Every man has hindrances. Do you likewise get rid of your hindrances, and come to Jesus. Read it again: "And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus." He was in earnest; he came to Jesus. He got through the crowd, until he stood in the presence of Jesus. "And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" That is the point: "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" "The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight." He wanted to see; he wanted his sight.

What do you want? Your sins forgiven; your soul saved; pardon, love, and acceptance with Him? You may have all. What Christ does, is to put down a blank cheque, with His name at the bottom, and you

can fill it in for any amount you like. He says to you to-night, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" What is it you desire? That you may see the Saviour, the Son of God, who died but rose again? "Lord, that I might receive my sight," said the blind man. "And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight." His eyes were opened, and what was the first object he saw? Jesus! And that is what happens when the eyes of the sinner are opened. He sees Jesus.

The Lord says to him: "Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and *followed Jesus in the way*." He did what the rich young man did not do. Jesus said to the rich young man, "*Come*, take up the cross, and follow me." And he went away sorrowful. To this man, with his eyes now open, what did Jesus say? "*Go* thy way." Observe the Lord never makes a man follow Him. He would not make him a compulsory follower, if I may so speak. He who follows Him must love to follow, and that is just Bartimæus' case. What do I read? "He received his sight, *and followed Jesus* in the way." He quickly made up his mind that henceforth the way of Jesus was to be his way. He followed Jesus. That was right. There is no compulsion. Did I tell you that you must follow Jesus, you would not do it. But you may follow Jesus. If you learn His love, you will follow Him. You will say from this night, Christ for me, and I am going to follow Christ, through evil report, and good. I am going to be for Jesus, and to follow Him in the way.

You have true discipleship here. The Lord help you to follow Him too. That is the right and wise thing to "do."

CHAPTER XIII.

A Prisoner and a King; or, Almost a Christian.

(Acts xxvi.)

IT is worthy of note that this is the third time that the Spirit of God is pleased to record the conversion of Saul, afterwards named Paul, when, as an aged man, with outstretched hand, and manacled wrists, he addressed the king. Whether or no the king was converted by the prisoner's address, is a question; but that Agrippa got the opportunity of receiving Christ as his Saviour, on that occasion, is undoubted. That you will have the opportunity, friend, of receiving Christ as your Saviour to-night, I believe, is as certain; and I would like at the outset to urge you not to do as Agrippa did. He did not absolutely decide for the Saviour, of whom he had heard.

Now, I say, this is the third time that Paul's conversion is given us (*see* Acts ix. 1-30, xxii. 1-16). Could God write about your conversion yet? Sometimes people say to me, You should not speak about yours. Well, friends, I cannot help it. If I live till the 16th inst., it will be my birthday: I shall be thirty-seven years old. Perhaps you think I am a little grey for a man of thirty-seven years. It is seven-and-thirty years since I began to live truly, and I always

keep my birthday. I do not ask my friends to do it. But I do it, and when the 16th of December comes round, I remember, This is the day that Christ met me in 1860. I am not to-night going to tell you of my conversion, however, I am going to tell you of Paul's, and I hope, friend, that if you have never been able to say you were converted, that you will be able to turn back to this night and say, God converted me then by the revelation of light from heaven, in the Oddfellows' Hall.

Did I hear you say, I do not believe in conversion? It is a real thing, nevertheless. I admit it is not a very fashionable topic, and perhaps you do not often hear about it. You do not like it. Well, I would just like you to understand this; you must either be converted, or damned; you must either be converted to God, and brought to face His grace, and to know His voice, or you will have to taste the judgment of God, in respect of your sin. If I did not believe that, I should not stand upon this platform to address you, I assure you. You may tell me you do not believe it. I know it, and that is the reason why God sends the gospel to you. It was when we did not know His grace, and did not believe His gospel, and when the love of God was nothing to our hearts, and the tale of Jesus but an empty sound in our ears, that God's Spirit, in holy love to us, convicted us of our sins, and broke us down before God. The gospel did that for me, and, thank God! it has reached many a heart in this hall to-night besides mine. I hope it may reach you to-night; for, mark, your heart is no harder than Paul's was.

You are no further away from the arm of the Saviour than Saul of Tarsus was; because, he tells us

elsewhere that he was "the chief of sinners." He says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. i. 15). Now he did not pen that in mock modesty. I quite admit that his life outwardly would bear comparison with anybody's here to-night. There is not a man in this hall this evening whose outward life could compare at all with Paul's (or Saul's, as he was then called). But yet, when he comes to see it in the light of the Saviour's estimate of what he was when the grace of Christ met him, he says distinctly—and the Holy Ghost has penned it, and the Holy Ghost never writes what is not true,—"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; *of whom I am chief*." Wherein lay the sin of this moral, religious man, who was yet the "chief of sinners"? It was this; he was persecuting Christ. He was no drunkard; outwardly he was a perfectly moral man. He was no loose liver; he was a most careful man. He was no profligate, no debauchee. You may be that, but Christ can save you notwithstanding; because the chief of sinners has been saved.

Wherein, then, was it that Paul was the chief of sinners? I repeat, it was in this: He had bitterly and deeply hated the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, and had done his best to blot that name out of the earth. As he tells us himself here, his malignity against the followers of Jesus had reached such a level, that he was engaged upon a missionary enterprise of extermination. He wanted to blot the name of Jesus from the face of the earth, and also every man or woman who believed in Jesus; and, therefore, as we now read from this scripture, his missionary

zeal became so violent that he secured credentials from the chief priests and travelled over the burning deserts to Damascus, that he might lead the Christians to Jerusalem, there to blaspheme the name of Christ; or, if they did not do that, to taste certain and violent death. What a lovely business that was for an intelligent man! It was while on such an enterprise and mission that this man was met; light shone upon him from heaven, and he was converted. Oh! the grace of Christ! Think of the grace of the Saviour; for we have all been opposed to Him, more or less. There is no man, no hearer, in this hall to-night who has not, more or less, been opposed to the Saviour; unless, indeed, he has been brought to Christ in early and tender years.

The grace of Christ met Saul of Tarsus, and the same grace waits on you. Oh, that you might taste it now!

When this scene before us occurred, Paul was a prisoner. He had been converted for over a quarter of a century. The historical account is given in the ninth chapter of the Acts, and his own account he has given in the twenty-second of Acts, when the Jews caught him with the intent of killing him. After that he had appealed to Cæsar, so to Rome he must go. Festus could not send a prisoner to Rome without giving some substantial indication of the crime that was laid to his charge. King Agrippa having come to Cæsarea with a great deal of pomp and ceremony, Festus takes the opportunity of bringing Paul out of Herod's judgment-hall, that he might examine him, and have something certain to write regarding the prisoner whom the Jews demanded should be put to death, because he was preaching Jesus.

In this way God brings this simple, fervent evangelist-apostle into the presence of royalty. Look at him, as he stands there with the chains upon him. That he was bound there can be no doubt, for he himself says, he wishes them all to be such as he was, "except these bonds" (ver. 29). He did not want them to be manacled as he was for the truth's sake. He was "the prisoner of Jesus Christ, for you Gentiles," as he puts it in the third of Ephesians; and here a prisoner in bonds.

He was in the presence of royalty, and was given permission to speak. And we hear him tell how he was converted. "I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee, touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently" (vers. 2, 3).

I have to ask of you the same favour to-night—hear me patiently! I have a difficult subject in hand, but hear me patiently; and I think if you believe what God may let fall from my lips to-night, you will do as this man did—praise the Saviour from this night forth. "My manner of life, from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee" (vers. 4, 5). That is, outwardly he was a most religious man. As he elsewhere says, "Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Phil. iii. 6). He was, legally, a spotless man: he was a man who had done everything that could be expected to give him

a place before God, yet he had to give all up. You may have never so much righteousness in yourself, my friend; but it will not do for God. A man came to me during last week in soul exercise. He had heard me preach last Sunday night, and the difficulty in his soul was this, he was trying to get a little bit of righteousness, something to cover himself with; but the Word of God showed him that, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa. lxiv. 6).

None of you would care to appear in this company to-night clothed in filthy rags? How then could you appear in the presence of God so apparelled—in "filthy rags"? It is not your bad deeds that are thus spoken of—it is your very best deeds, even these are unfit for God. Paul did not know that; he had to learn it, and we shall to-night see how he learnt it. He says to Agrippa, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" Paul had learned that Jesus died, and rose again; he had learned that the Lord had risen from the dead. He had seen Him in glory, and the result was that he preached His name. "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" Whom did he refer to? Christ. He had died. And why did Christ die? He died for sinners. That is the wonderful news which the gospel brings to us, that "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. v. 6). Paul had got hold of the blessed news that the Son of God had become incarnate; had become a man in this world; that He passed through it a blessed, holy, sinless man; and that at length, in grace, He died on the cross for man.

It is quite true, man put Him there, but when there He died to make atonement for sin. But God raised Him from the dead. Wickedness nailed Him to the tree. Hatred slew Him; love took Him down from the cross, and buried Him; and fear sealed Him in the tomb. Do not forget that! They rolled a great stone to the mouth of the tomb, and set a watch over it. Was not that a strange thing? They put a guard around a dead man. And why? Because, they were afraid He would rise; and thank God, that was what happened. He has been raised. If hatred slew Him, love buried Him, and fear sealed Him in the tomb, what raised Him? Righteousness. It was His due, and He got it. The glory of the Father raised Him, as we read, "Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father" (Rom. vi. 4). God took that sinless man out of death, and put Him into glory. Paul had seen Him there, and been commissioned to proclaim the news. He had been preaching it to the Gentiles, and for that dire offence he is accused of the Jews, and cast into prison. Strange that man should refuse the most blessed tidings that ever fell on mortal ears!

I pray you to carefully note his question, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" Resurrection is the very backbone of the gospel: it is the evidence that the work of redemption is accomplished; that the power of the enemy has been broken; that death has been annulled; that sins are wiped away; that God's claims in righteousness are met. The fruit of the cross is that the door of heaven is opened, so to speak, to allow of the outflowing of the rich grace of God, to a guilty world. Satan could not stand that: there-

fore he used these Jews to silence, if possible, the witness, and crush the "chosen vessel" of this heavenly testimony. "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" I hear some one saying, "Of course God can raise the dead." Let me ask you, my friend, How do you expect to be raised? Do you expect to be raised up to be judged? I pity you if you are expecting that. Are you going to be raised from the dead, and then have the question of your sins and your standing before God settled? There is no salvation, in that case, for you. Thank God! I know this; that the Man who knew no sin, and who did no sin, and on whom death had no claim, because He had never sinned, died for sinners, and God has raised that Man from the dead. What, then, is the outcome of that for the heart that trusts in Him? Absolute association with Himself. He has paid the penalty that I should have paid. The debt that I should have met, He has liquidated. I often hear people talking about dying, and "paying nature's debt." I shall never do that, I am glad to say. What then, you say, will you not die? I do not say that, my friend. All I say is, *I need not;* because Another has died for me. Blessed be His name, Another, upon whom death had no claim, has gone down to death for the man on whom it had a claim; and God has taken that Man out of the grave, and has put Him into glory after He bore the sins of the man for whom He died. That is the point, do you not see? God has put Jesus into glory, after He bore my sins on the cross. "The wages of sin is death:" that He bore for me, passed into the grave, and God has taken Him out of it, and put Him in glory. That is how I know I am saved.

I was dealing with an anxious man last Monday night. He had much difficulty about the gospel. "If anybody is going to be kept out of heaven for my sins," said I, "do you know who it is?" He thought for a minute, and said, "You?" "No," I replied. We had just been talking about Christ being once offered "to bear the sins of many." He saw the truth, and said, "If anybody be kept out, it will be Jesus." I said, "Exactly so." "But," he replied, "you cannot keep Him out." "No," I said, "He has gone in for me, and that is why I know I am going in. You cannot keep Him out; He is gone in, but before He went in He had taken up the question of sin. He bore the judgment of God for sin, and He settled for ever the question of sin upon the cross for all who trust in Him. He has made Himself responsible for my liabilities; and, thank God, I am clear in the clearance of Christ. I hang on Him, and fall or rise with Him. I am clear in this fact, that what He has done, has infinitely glorified God, and the whole question of sin has been settled on the cross. Christ 'was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification' (Rom. iv. 25). And what is the result? 'Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ'" (Rom. v. 1).

Christ's work was complete in what He did for sinners, and in respect of sin; and when He goes into the grave in the fulfilment of Scripture, God comes in righteousness, and takes Him out of the grave, and puts Him into glory. He is now the life and righteousness of every one who believes in Him. Be clear as to that, Christ is our righteousness before God. If I do not get Christ for my righteousness, then I cannot be in God's presence. There is only One Man who

perfectly suits God, and that spotless Man adorns the throne of God this night, crowned with glory. That Man is my Saviour. Oh! that you could say the same. The resurrection of Jesus, I repeat, is the backbone of the gospel; and that is just what Satan could not stand, when the apostles preached it; and therefore there was a stir got up among the Jews. The apostles taught not merely the resurrection *of* the dead, but the resurrection *from among* the dead. God's resurrection of Jesus was a witness to the value of the work that He did, not for Himself, but for others,—for you and for me. There must be resurrection. But is it going to be a resurrection unto judgment? That is the question. I have in the work that Christ has accomplished, and through His resurrection, a right to appear before God, and that means peace, pardon, and deliverance to my soul, and to every one that gets hold of Christ.

Now, Paul had been busy working out his own righteousness, and he learns that he has to give it all up. "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests: and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them" (vers. 9, 10). In all this, he was the chief of legalists, as well as the chief of sinners. His persecution of the Church was the full measure of his sin. So, he says to the legalists, you will have to give all up, and let Jesus save you; and he says to the poor despairing sinner, You may be sinner number two, friend; but you cannot be number one. I was sinner number one, and Jesus saved me. Do you see? You

and I may be numbers two and three, but we cannot be chief: there are not two chiefs, and Paul says, "Sinners, of whom *I am chief*." You and I may have second and third place, but we cannot be number one. If number one has been saved, then there is hope for you.

He here unfolds what made him chief of sinners, and how the Lord arrested him. "And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me" (vers. 11-13). In one moment, as he is breathing out threatenings and slaughter, and going to hale those simple, faithful Christians to Jerusalem, really for their murder, in a moment a light, brighter than the sun at noonday, shines about him and those with him. Now, mark that! The noonday sun with us is often not very bright. We have often a murky sky; but, picture to yourself the wonderful brilliancy of the Eastern noonday sun, when in undimmed splendour, it casts its rays over all the land. And yet that light was dimmed by a brighter light; and what was the mightier light? Have you ever thought what that light was? I will tell you! "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6).

Where did that light come from? It came from

the face of the Man in glory; and the effulgence of the glory from that Man's face eclipsed the light of the sun at noonday. Its effect was all-powerful towards Paul. "And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me." It smote him to the ground. It brought this self-confident, self-righteous man to the conclusion of the history of his self-will. It was light from heaven that did it: it was not an earthquake; it was not a lightning flash; it was not a hand that struck him; it was light that struck him down. Has light ever struck you? I shall never forget when light struck me, and illuminated me! I shall never forget when light from heaven showed me what I was, where I was, and where I was going. And, my friend, when you have been struck by the light, you will speak similarly.

We read that the whole party were struck to the earth, but only Saul heard the Lord's voice. "*I heard a voice speaking unto me*, and saying *in the Hebrew tongue*, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (ver. 14). Fancy hearing your mother tongue from glory. That is what Saul heard that day. It would not do you much good, if I were talking to you in Arabic: you would not understand a word of it. But you can understand plain English. Paul was in a similar position. He heard a voice speaking to him in his mother tongue; that is, in Hebrew. An unknown voice, in that language, speaks to the smitten man. And, friend, be sure of this, when God speaks to a sinner, He always makes him understand. I quite admit, there were along with Saul those who did not understand what was said, for elsewhere we read, "They that were with me saw indeed the light, and

were afraid ; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me " (Acts xxii. 9). When God speaks to a man, he is individualised : he is like a stricken deer. The deer-stalker goes out, and a herd may go by ; but he only takes aim at one, and when the deer is wounded it will leave the herd to go alone to die. When a man is convicted of his sin by the Holy Ghost, he gets alone with God. Paul says, " I alone heard the voice." And what did it say? " Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" What did that mean? It meant that Christ in glory, the head of the Church, owned His beloved people on earth as part of Himself—as forming His body ; in plain language He says, Touch them, and you touch me. " Why persecutest thou me?"

" And I said, Who art thou, Lord?" He does not say, " Who art thou?" No, he asks, " Who art thou, Lord?" In a moment he has the sense, I am in the presence of One who knows all about me. I am in the presence of One who Himself is God. He knew very well who it was ; though, perhaps, he dared not mention His name. He was in the presence of God, —in the presence of the exalted Son of Man. " Who art thou, Lord?" His will is broken, after he has come to recognise the Lord. Have you ever, dear friend, recognised such a Lord? " Who art thou, Lord?" What does that mean? I have come down ; I am broken down ; my will is broken. Yes, he was wonderfully broken down.

And then from glory there came these touching words, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest" (ver. 15). Friend, He speaks to you to-night from glory. That blessed, loving Saviour, who was crucified on the tree, speaks now to each heart in this hall. " I am Jesus,

whom thou persecutest." Perhaps you would not like to take that ground. Ah! you did not laugh at that young fellow, who said he was a Christian, did you? Oh! yes, you say, I poked a little fun at him. Why? Because he was a Christian; that was why. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" What ill has Jesus done you, my friend? What ill has the Lord done to you? If I could get the oldest heart, the hardest heart, or the coldest heart that hears me, to have the sense of the Saviour's love, how that would change it. "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." Oh! hear His blessed voice this night. Saul heard it, and said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6.) And what does the Lord tell him to do? "Rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee. Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee" (vers. 16, 17).

Here this "chosen vessel" gets his commission; and a wonderful commission it was. I quite admit he did not get peace at that moment. He had not yet the knowledge of forgiveness. We are told in another scripture, that he neither ate nor drank for three days (Acts ix. 9). And I suppose he did not sleep for three nights either. Then Ananias comes to him. You get these details in the ninth of Acts. He gets peace from the testimony of Ananias, who comes in to him. And in this case also, you see how wonderful is the grace of Christ. Saul has a vision of Ananias coming to him, and Ananias gets word to go to him. There is on the one side the anxious man, and on the other the slow-moving servant; for Ananias, when

commissioned, says, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem." Never mind, says the Lord, "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles." I am going to make him a messenger, and a witness of My name amongst the Gentiles. In came Ananias then, and put his hands upon him, saying, "Brother Saul." What a thrill went through that man's soul as Ananias called him "Brother Saul." I can understand it well; for when some simple Somersetshire Christians, the week after I was converted, gave me the right hand of fellowship, and let me take my place with them at the Lord's Supper, there was a deep thrill of joy went through my soul that they should acknowledge that I was a child of God. Can we call you "Brother," my friend? I mean, honestly and truly, or are you ashamed of the name? The name Brother, simply brother, will do for me. A brother of what? Of that company of whom it is said, "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." I would be ashamed to call Him Brother. I would not even use the term "Elder Brother." He is our Lord, and our God. True, Christ calls us His brethren: "He is not ashamed to call them brethren;" but, beloved Christian friends, He is our Lord and Master, our Saviour and our God. Let us ever have the deepest reverence for Him, and give Him his right place and title.

Here then, comes in Ananias and says, "Brother Saul"; and the latter gets peace, as he was filled with the Holy Ghost, and the scales fell from his eyes. Thereon he began to carry out the commission which the Lord had given him. And what was it? "Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles,

unto whom now I send thee. To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in me" (Acts xxvi. 17, 18). What a wonderful commission! "To open their eyes." That is the first thing we need. I wonder if your eyes have ever been opened yet. When a man's eyes are opened he is conscious that he has no light, and that he is in darkness. A man may have never so good eyes, but he cannot see with them in the darkness, and he gropes about. That is just how I felt the night I was converted. I felt like a man groping in a dark night; I wanted light, I wanted truth, I wanted Christ, and I wanted salvation. I did not know how or where I was to get Him.

Let your eyes be opened, and you will soon find you are all wrong; that you are a sinner in your sins, and that you are on the wrong road. It is a wonderful thing when a man is turned "from darkness to light." It is a great change. I quite understand that some of you do not think so, and I will tell you why. You have never gone through the change. Now, my Christian friend, you, who were converted five years ago, what happened when you were converted? "I was in midnight darkness," you say, "when the glorious light of the gospel burst upon me. I saw that Jesus had loved me, and died for me; that He had forgiven me, and that through faith in His name, I got into peace and liberty." Exactly so; and do you tell me, my unsaved friend, that you do not believe that testimony? I will tell you why. You are in the darkness, and the very fact that you do not believe that you are, is the most powerful evidence that you

are there. I will tell you why. I was once where you are; thirty-seven years ago, I was standing on the same ground as you are on this minute. I was a sinner in my sins. I do not mince matters. There are only two classes in this hall to-night—hell-bound sinners, or glory-bound saints. What makes the difference? One class is in sin, and unbelief; the other is in Christ, and all their sins are washed away in His precious blood. A great change took place in the moment of my conversion; it was as if I had slipped from darkness into light, and I have enjoyed the latter ever since.

This was a wonderful commission that Paul received, and I am quite clear upon this point, if the Lord had not known the necessity of it as regards the souls of men, He never would have given it. All need to be turned "from the power of Satan unto God." Every man is absolutely under the power of Satan, until he is under a sense of the grace of God. I hear some one say, I do not believe that. For many a long day, I did not believe it; but I believe it now, because I have learnt what the blessedness is of getting out of darkness into light, and of knowing the Saviour's delivering power.

What is the result when you are turned from Satan to God? Your heart at once gets into the enjoyment of peace, in the knowledge that you are forgiven. The moment you turn from Satan to God, what do you get? The due reward of your sins? Judgment for your sins? No! You "receive forgiveness of sins." Think of that! What will you get, if you turn just now to the Saviour? You will get your sins forgiven. That is not to be lightly esteemed; but there is still more, for you receive "inheritance among them

which are sanctified, by faith that is in me." That is, you get a portion and a place among God's people. You may think that too great and good a transition. Not so, and you cannot move too soon from the platform of the sinner on to the spot where the saint is, by grace. But you say, I thought the saints were all in heaven. A great many are; but I believe that there are a good many in this hall to-night. What! saints, you say; I did not think people were saints on earth. Then you are mistaken, my friend. Saint is the family name; that is the name by which God's children are called in Scripture. The word is used by Ananias when he does not want to go to Saul. He says, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem" (Acts ix. 13). Let a man turn to the Lord, and he is then and there given, though he may not immediately take, his place among the saints.

Friend, are you to be henceforth classed among the sinners, or among the saints? You say, I would not like to take the name of saint. Why? Because if I were to take the place, and be known as a saint, people would look for a saintly walk on my part. That is quite right; I do not object to that. If you accept Christ, there ought to be a walk and conversation becoming the gospel. Do not be afraid, young fellow-believer, you will find that if you follow the Lord He will help you. I do not mean to say that the Christian does not sin, but he is told not to (1 John ii. 1). His sins are forgiven the moment he becomes a believer, and if he should sin he has to go and confess all to God, as his Father. The gospel meets you where you are, as a sinner, through the

atoning work of the Saviour; and through the precious blood of Jesus all your sins are washed away and forgiven, for the heart that trusts in Him gets all the benefit of the work He has done. I want you to see this, for your help and comfort. Do not think that it is a mistake, if you are a Christian, to boldly confess that you are such. The seven-and-thirty years that have passed since I was converted, have been years of profound happiness, and joy. I will say more; the last year was the best, and I am expecting better still, as I get into my thirty-eighth year. Let me encourage you, my friend.

Paul then passes on to say, that he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but went out at once calling upon Jew and Gentile to repent, and turn to God. The Jews opposed him, but having "obtained help of God," he can add, "I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles" (vers. 22, 23). As he went on, Festus broke out. His conscience was a little bit touched; he felt that if he did not stop him, he would very likely be converted. I know some of you would like me to stop, and I will shortly, but what a mercy it would be if you were converted, and if you turned to the Lord. Listen to me. Come to Jesus; yield your heart to Him now. Do not be like the foolish king, and governor here. "And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but

speak forth the words of truth and soberness." What had he said? He had only told them of the Son of Man in glory. He knew his own sins were forgiven: he had been on the road to eternal judgment when he had been turned to God; and from that time forth he began to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and warned others to follow in his steps.

Jesus, risen from the dead, had commissioned him as a light-bearer. Thus commissioned to carry a light from God unto the world, he had with deathless energy gone on in His blessed service. Happy man! Splendid servant! You are a madman, says Festus. "I am not mad, most noble Festus," he emphatically but very courteously retorts. "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." Sometimes people have said of me, I think that man is mad. I wish you had only half my malady, my dear friend; from the bottom of my heart I wish that. Nay, I will go further—I would be deeply thankful if you had ten times as much fervour and earnestness for Christ as I, and God give it to you. If you had only half the peace and joy I have, you would be a downright happy man from this time forth, and I too speak the words of truth and soberness, when I thus affirm the blessedness of knowing and seeing Christ. I think Paul was quite sane as he spoke to Festus. What he was before he was converted, he tells us himself: "And being *exceedingly mad* against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities" (ver. 11). Then he was mad, if you like, but, as a witness for Jesus, he was in his right mind. Oh! my friend, you come to Jesus to-night, and thus bear witness for Him, and though your friends call you mad, never mind. You will be on

the winning side of the field. The man who follows Christ is sure to win.

Hear him speak again: "I am not mad . . . but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner" (vers. 25, 26). Then he turns round on the king and asks: "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Almost! Ah! poor man, not altogether. Almost! Is that your position, my friend? I want to know, as I draw these meetings to a close. For several nights past I have been speaking to you; have you believed on Jesus? Has He saved you, pardoned you, forgiven you? Or are you a miserable, procrastinating sinner, who will yet work your way into hell, with a determination worthy of a better cause? Men abound who cannot be in earnest; who may be touched by the gospel sometimes, yea even impressed, but yet let the whole thing pass away again. What a lot of followers Agrippa has! "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," said he to Paul, and so say all his followers to the soul-seekers, who would fain win them for Christ.

Well did Paul reply, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both *almost*, and *altogether* such as I am, except these bonds" (ver. 29). That was a grand rejoinder, and I would like to say a word on it. "Almost" and "altogether" in this conjunction are like a coin of the realm. You have the Queen's head on one side, and on the reverse, some other design. What is the

obverse of "almost a Christian"? Do not forget, it is "altogether lost." The soul that is only *almost* decided, is *altogether* lost. Oh, let me urge you, with all the fervour and affection of my soul, from this hour, be decided. What is wanted is decision. What you want, what I want, is deep, downright, decision of heart for Christ. God give it to you. Oh! do not continue to be "almost a Christian" any longer. Be "altogether" persuaded. I glory in being a Christian: may you do so too.

May God enable you to begin your Christian course to-night: you cannot be too devoted to Christ, and it is better far, be your life long or short, to be able to look back upon that life as spent in the service of the Lord. Forgive me, if I speak of myself. But if I had not come to the Lord thirty-seven years ago, what should I have been doing all my life? I should simply have been serving the devil, sin, and the world, just pleasing myself, whereas now by grace, for these seven-and-thirty years I have been seeking to serve Jesus, my blessed Saviour. Oh! that He were your Saviour, and Lord, and Master, as well. In Him there is such greatness, such tenderness, such encouragement! I have a wonderful Master; and I commend Him to you. Oh! that He were yours.

Make up your mind to-night. On bended knee, before the Lord, offer yourself to Him, ere you leave this hall to-night. Turn, and say to Him, "Lord, I believe." "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" will not suffice. Away with the word "almost." Let "altogether persuaded" be the language of your soul. Let there be a true ring in your voice as you say: "Lord, I believe; I am decided. Christ for me, from this night forth." God grant it, for His name's sake!

CHAPTER XIV.

"No Man can Serve Two Masters;" or, How I Found the Lord.

(James ii. 19; Matt. vi. 24.)

ON this, our closing meeting, I will tell you, my friends, as promised, how, by the infinite grace of God, I learned to know the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour. I am thirty-seven years of age to-night. You look a little older than that, perhaps a man says; you have surely lived longer in the world than thirty-seven years. Yes, but I was like you — dead, while I lived. Young man! you have not begun to live unless you are converted. If you are not born of God, you have not begun to live; you are yet dead in your sins. I was dead for a good many years. I know some of you think, that a man could not be converted in one night. That is a great mistake; it takes but one moment to pass from death unto life. It takes but one moment to go through the door; and so I found it in my case.

For twenty years, I believe, I was about the most thorough-going young worldling you could have met with. There is not a man in this hall to-night, who was more deeply immersed in the world, in its pleasures, its sin, and its enticements, nor a more downright, out-and-out slave of the devil, than the man who

speaks to you to-night. And yet in one hour God saved me. Hence, I love to sing—

> "Jesus sought me when a stranger,
> Wand'ring from the fold of God;
> He, to rescue me from danger,
> Interposed His precious blood."

I thank God that I had a pious mother—a praying mother. Perhaps you have one, and she has gone to heaven. Mine has, thank God, and I shall meet her again. Will you meet yours, if she has gone there? It is an inestimable boon for a man to have a praying mother, and much, I know, mine prayed for me. But for twenty years I knew nothing of the grace of God, nothing whatever!

My first real spiritual impression was when I was a schoolboy. I had a brother going out to the Crimean War in 1855. He was passing where I was at school, and I was to have met him at the train; but I missed the train. I was far more interested in other things, I may say. I had gone off to buy some new stumps for a coming cricket match, and spent too long over that, and so missed the train. I was very sorry, I know, at being a minute or two late, and the thought entered my mind, We may never meet again, perhaps he will be slain in the Crimea. I thought he was a Christian, and I knew I was not, and the thought that we might never meet again made such an impression upon my mind that it led me to what I then considered to be very meritorious. I set to work to read the Bible, as a sort of offset against my sins. I know perfectly well that I chose Isaiah, as being the most difficult part of the Bible, and therefore, in my opinion, the most meritorious thing I could do. But when I

got to the end, I was just where I was before I began, —an unsaved sinner, in my sins.

School life passed by, and I got into an office in the town in which I lived. I had meant to be a lawyer at that time; and, although Blackstone did engage my attention in office hours, my heart was far more in everything that concerned the world, and its enjoyments, than anything else. There was not a ball or a concert, a regatta, or a cricket match, or a worldly entertainment of any kind, within twenty miles of where I was staying, that I was not in, if I could get to it. I just want you to see where I was before Christ met me.

But God spoke to me again, when I was about nineteen. A fine hearty young Christian—oh! it is a grand thing for a young man to be bold for Christ—came to see my father, from a distance. When he was leaving, my father said to me, "Show him down to the carriage gate." I went down the avenue with him, and at the gate he quietly turned to me, and said, "Well, Walter, are you a Christian?" "No!" "Then, had you not better come to the Lord?" I got very angry with him for talking to me in that way, and rapidly closed the gate. Ah! I was on my way down to hell, and my anger just showed how bitter was my hatred against Christ, and against His servants. Spite of that I was touched by his faithfulness, and if there were any young man I respected it was he, for no other ever dared to speak to me in that way. God had His eye upon me, blessed be His name!

In December 1860, it was arranged that I should go to London, to pursue my legal studies there. I accordingly quitted my home in Devonshire on the 4th of the month, leaving behind me a good many

engagements for the Christmas week. The national volunteer movement had just sprung up, and I flung myself, heart and soul, into the organisation of the local artillery corps. We wanted a band, and money was not easily found, so we thought we would raise the funds by a concert. I recollect how tremendously I threw my heart into the concert, and I was set down for the comic songs, which suited me admirably in those days. We had one concert, and it was an immense success, so we arranged to have another at Christmas, because so many people could not get seats at the first. We arranged a new programme, and I remember very well, the conductor said to me, "If you go to London, you will not come back." "On my oath," I said, "I promise you that I will come down and sing." "Remember we cannot put another in your place." "Have no fear," I replied, "I will come down, for I have half-a-dozen most charming engagements for Christmas week, which I must keep."

I went up to London on Tuesday, 4th December, and I have no doubt God used this as a link in the chain of blessing, for I was leaving home really for the first time, and felt correspondingly that I was taking a serious step in life. Some of you fellows have left home, and know what that is. In the boarding-house, where I at first put up in the City, there was a young man, Tom W——, who came from the same county as I, and we naturally were drawn together, when we found that we came from towns within ten miles of each other, and that our parents were acquainted. He was going to study engineering, and I was going in for the law, but we soon agreed that we would lodge together. The next day we

hunted about for lodgings, and on Saturday we took up our lodging together in Islington.

On Lord's Day we lay abed, just as some of you fellows do, till late on in the forenoon, thinking that if we went to church in the evening that would suffice in the way of religion. Sunday is really an awfully dull day for an unconverted man. I had received a letter from my dear old mother, urging me to go and hear the gospel, and my friend, Tom, asked me: "Where are you going? What do you say, shall we go and hear Richard Weaver? I see in the papers he is going to preach in Surrey Theatre to-night." To this I agreed, and about five o'clock we set out for Blackfriars Road.

I shall never forget that scene. The street was crowded outside the door. God was working in those days wonderfully, and souls were being saved in hundreds and thousands; and, I believe, that the man we went to hear was the means of awakening thousands of souls to their real condition before God, and of bringing them to a knowledge of Christ, and salvation. When the doors were opened, the flood of people poured in. I was separated from my comrade. He was carried to the pit, while I got to the dress circle, and then into one of the stage boxes. The theatre was crammed, and to 3,500 souls did that simple collier preach the blessed gospel of the grace of God. My memory will always retain some of the things I heard that night from him, as, from the crowded stage, he read Mark v. 25-34, and then told us the simple story of the woman with the issue of blood, and how all her disease and distresses were healed, when she simply touched the hem of the garment of Jesus. I saw clearly enough that salva-

tion was by the simple touch of faith; but then, you see, he was only a common man, I thought, and I was a gentleman, and I could not be converted by a common man. Such was the pride of my poor sinful heart. Ah, my friend, take care lest you be damned through your pride. Take care lest you are damned, because you will not be saved in God's own way. But God had His eye upon me that night, and I was in measure impressed.

At the close it was intimated that if any were anxious they might go to the pit. I went down to the pit, not because I was anxious, but because, somehow, I thought that my friend might be anxious, and would be found there. I was not there three minutes before a young man, a simple fellow, came to me and said, "Sir, are you a Christian?" "No, I am not," I replied. "Would you not like to be one?" he next asked me. "I do not know," I said. "Oh, surely you had better be a Christian, and it is very easy to become one. I became one last Sunday evening. I went to Exeter Hall, and there I was converted by Richard Weaver's preaching." He began soon, that young man; he was not long converted before he began to tell others about it, and I hope you young fellows, who have been converted, will not be long in telling others about it too. He began well, you see.

I found out then who he was, and that he was a working tailor. He then said to me, "Will you not pray?" and I replied, "I never could pray." Then he said, "I shall pray for you," and he got down on his knees in the theatre, and prayed most fervently to God to bless, and save me. Thank God, he answered that young man's prayer; though I was too cowardly to get down on my knees then. I had to get down on

my knees afterwards—and you will have to get down on your knees, be sure of that—but I was too proud to bend my knees at that moment. Tom W—— had been in the pit, saw me, and came over. At that moment another young man, very earnest and intelligent looking, came over, and joining in the conversation, spoke a few words to me. I then rose to leave, and this stranger asked, "Which way do you go, gentlemen?" "Towards Islington." "Our way lies together then, as I live there, and if I may I will accompany you." To this we agreed, and outside the theatre he turned and said to us, "May I ask, Are you Christians?" We both replied, "No." "And would you not like to be Christians?" he next asked. I said, I would, for I began to think it was worth while being a Christian. "Then," said he, "you must be in earnest about it." "I hope we will be," I replied, "but what must I do to become a Christian?" "If you are in earnest about it, and really mean to be one, you must give up the world." Give up the world! Oh! how I clung to it at the moment when he suggested that; but, earnest as he was, he did not then know the gospel clearly. Then there came before my mind the memory of my engagements in Christmas week, and the uppermost thought was, How can I give them up?

Well, we walked up the three miles to Islington, and when near our lodgings I said, "Will you come in and have a cup of coffee with us?" He came in, and before going away he asked, "May I read a little bit with you?" "Certainly," we said, and then he read a portion of Scripture, and prayed with us. He was a nice young man, we thought, and so he was, and he became a great friend afterwards.

When he had left, my companion and I sat quietly at the sides of the fireplace, each thinking. All of a sudden, I remember, I said, "Tom, I think, if you and I are going to live together, and have God's blessing, we had better have family reading." "Dear me, Wolston," he replied, "that was the very thing I had on my mind, but I did not like to say it. We will buy a book to-morrow, and begin." "No books," said I; "if a man is going to pray to God, he should pray himself. I do not believe in praying other men's prayers; we ought to pray for ourselves. I do not believe in books, except the Bible. If we are going to pray, we will pray ourselves." Then Tom said, "How shall we begin?" "One of us will read, and the other will pray," I said. "I will read to-morrow, and you shall pray." He agreed, and next morning, when we came downstairs, I read the first of Matthew, and my friend prayed. I thought he did it splendidly. The next day it was my turn; he read the Bible, and I had to pray. I shall never forget what I felt when it was my turn to pray. My heart was in my mouth; but I was in downright earnest. I wanted to be saved, and he wanted to be saved too. I wish you were in the same mind. If you are anxious to be saved, you will be.

That week was a remarkable one, because we did pray earnestly in the morning, and in private too. There came over our souls a deep sense of our sins. We cried to God, too, for our relatives. "God save our relations," was frequently our prayer, for we had such a sense of our own sins, that, though we prayed, we had the fear we were too bad, too wicked, too sinful to be saved. This impression was deepened by the fact that though we read, and prayed earnestly

in the mornings, I should be ashamed to say where we were found in the evenings. We were fresh from the country, and must needs see London life, so its music-halls and other hells tempted us at night, for the devil has hell-traps of every kind in abundance for young men there, and God only kept us from being engulfed that week. So the week went round, and then the next Sunday came. My mother had besought me before leaving home, and again by letter, to go and hear her friend, Mr Miller, a Scotchman, a well-known evangelist, preach; and intent on this, we started out on the Sunday morning, but, when well on the way, I remembered that the morning meeting was for the breaking of bread, and worship of the Lord, and that would not do for us, what we wanted was the gospel, and we must wait for that till night.

Accordingly we waited till night, and then started again, but, oh, what a hunt we had to find the place. It was a murky, misty, cold night, and we went on, and on, until at length,—and I cannot help thinking the devil knew what was coming,—Tom W—— said, "I am not going a step farther." "You may go home," I said, "if you like, but I will find this place, even if I have to go till midnight." It was William Street, in the north of London, we were seeking, and just as Tom said he would not go another step, we were in it, but we could not see the name for the mist. "Is this William Street, where Mr Miller preaches?" "Yes," said a voice, "but he is not preaching to-night. He has gone down to Scotland; but Mr Charles Stanley is preaching." That name awakened old memories. When I was a boy of ten, that gentleman came to spend a day or two at my father's house. He wished to go to Dartmouth on some

business, and my father told me to drive him, which I did. When we came home, he put his hand in his pocket, and then gave me a pearl-handled, four-bladed knife. "Take that, my boy," he said, and I was quite proud of the gift. Ten years had rolled by, but the name, Charles Stanley, reminded me of the gift. "That is the man who gave me a knife," I said to myself; "let us go in and hear him."

The place was crammed; and we stood in the aisle. The preacher was speaking very simply from the story of Solomon building the temple. Stones, three hundred tons in weight, were taken to build the temple. He told us where they came from, a cavern below Jerusalem, and how they were hewn out of the quarry, and then taken out, and built into the temple. Then he pointed out that God was building a spiritual temple; that the world was the quarry, and sinners were the stones. They were so deeply embedded in the quarry, however, that a good deal of blasting was needed to get them out. It often took trouble, and distress, and sorrow to break up a man, and dislodge him from the world. Then, again, his sins had to be pressed on him, and by-and-by he got a little bit anxious. Just as Hiram shaped the top and sides of his stones, so did God's Spirit act on a sinner, to shape him to receive the gospel. But how were these stones, three hundred tons in weight, got into position? I shall never forget the preacher's remark as to this. Supposing Hiram had gone to these stones and said: "You great stones, I want you up out of this quarry. Get up this ladder, with only ten steps, and get into the temple." How could those stones move? They were lifeless. The application was easy. The ladder was the law, the ten commandments. Could I keep

them? Could I reach God's temple now, and heavenly glory hereafter, by keeping them? I saw that I could not. I began to get convicted; I began to get really anxious. I wish you were getting anxious. My brow became clouded. The brow of every man is clouded when he becomes serious about his soul. I was serious that night, and I will tell you why. I was a downright awakened sinner, I saw my sin, I saw my guilt; I saw the holiness of God. I knew if there was any one on earth who had righteously earned his way to the pit of hell, I was that man. I do not deny that I was deeply serious.

Then the preacher told us that, just as Hiram brought tackle and purchase, and lifted his big stones out of the quarry, and put them into the temple, without sound of hammer or chisel, so God was building His temple, composed of sinners, saved by grace, through the redemption of Jesus Christ. He showed us that God's Son had done the work *for* us, and His Spirit wrought *in* us; that the blood of atonement had been shed, and the claims of God had been all met by the Saviour on the cross. Jesus had died that the sinner might live. Christ's blood had been shed that the sins of the sinner might be washed away. I began then to think, Can this be for me? for I was deeply convicted of sin.

The meeting closed. Then the preacher said, "I will be glad to see anybody anxious, in the side room." Turning to my comrade, I said, "What are you going to do?" I shall never forget Tom's answer. "I am going home, to have it out with God." What had happened? He, too, was a convicted sinner. "Well," I said, "you can go home; I shall stay and speak to Charles Stanley." I went

round the back of the buildings into the little vestry, and there had a little conversation with dear Mr Stanley. He then introduced me to a Christian lady, the wife of the man I had gone to hear. She told me she had been expecting to see me, as she had heard of my being in London through my aunt, then living in Somersetshire. Presently she said to me, "Are you a Christian?" "No," I replied. "Would you not like to be one?" she next asked. "I should very much like to be one," I replied, "but I do not know how to become one." Then she said, turning to her daughter, "Fetch Tom," and she went in search of her brother. He was a light-haired young man, who, I noticed, had been very active in putting people into seats, and giving out hymn-books. He was active also in the after-meeting.

After being introduced, he said: "I am glad to meet you. We heard from your aunt in Somerset that you were coming, and now we shall be very happy to see you at our house, any time you can come." I thanked him for this courtesy, and then he turned to me, and said, "May I ask, Are you a Christian?" "No, I am not, and I cannot profess to be what I am not." "Do you not want to be a Christian?" "Yes, I should very much like to be a Christian." "And how are you going to become a Christian?" "I suppose by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ." "Yes, there is no other way," said he. "Do you believe in Him?" "Yes, of course," I replied, "we all believe." "What do you believe?" he next asked me. I was never so puzzled in all my life, as by that question, and after a little pause, I replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." "Quite true, and are you a sinner?" "Oh, yes, I know that I am

a sinner." "And did He come to save you?" "I hope so." "You hope so? and has He saved you?" "Oh, no!" "Why not?" "Because I do not *feel* saved," I said.

My friend thought a moment, and then continued, "You want to be saved, but you do not feel it?" "Exactly so," I replied, "I do not feel it." He then said: "You have not got to feel saved; all you have to do is believe what the Lord tells you. Do you believe He is able to save you?" "Yes." "And that He is willing to save you?" "Yes." "And are you willing to be saved?" "I am most desirous," I replied; "I would give all the world, if I had it, to know that I were saved, but how can I know it if I do not *feel* it? You surely do not expect me to believe a thing which I do not feel." "Indeed I do; I expect you to believe, because God says it, that the one who believes in His dear Son is forgiven, and saved." "Well," I replied, "I do believe." "What do you believe?" "I believe He is able, and willing to save me." "And that you are saved?" "No, I don't *feel* it." "Ah," said my friend, "I see where you are;" and he quoted to me that remarkable verse, in the Epistle of James, which runs thus, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble" (Jas. ii. 19). Then he added, "That is where you are."

Oh! my friends, never in all my history shall I forget the effect of that verse of God's Word on me. It was the means of my eternal salvation, although there is no gospel in it at all. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." It was a revelation from God; it was light to my soul. I saw my company, and I

am not ashamed to confess it, I fled. I fled! I saw I was the companion of devils. I had just the traditional faith of Christendom; I believed there was one God; the devils also believed. They trembled; I was trembling. They were not saved; I was not saved. I was on the same ground as the damned devils in hell. Their faith had not saved them; mine, being just like theirs, could not save me. I was overwhelmed. I confess the Word of God broke me to pieces; and I trembled yet more. I am not ashamed to say it, my knees smote together. I saw myself to be what God knew me to be, a man going to hell in his sins, and with a conventional faith that would not avail. Is that the position you are in? Wake up then to-night, I pray you, I implore you.

I was utterly staggered, and like the awakened jailor in Philippi's prison, I cried, "What must I do to be saved?" My friend saw the effect of the scripture on me, and replied: "Stop, there is a difference between you and the devils. They are past mercy; you are still on ground, where mercy will meet you, if you will take God at His word." "I will gladly take it, if I can get it. What am I to do?" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "What! only believe?" "Yes, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "But," I said, "I do not *feel* it." "Man," he replied, "never mind your feelings; fling your feelings overboard as useless, just as you would an old coat. If you trust in your feelings you will wake up in hell some day, and then you will know what your feelings are worth. You are not told to *feel*, you are told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. You must take God at His word."

I was just on the point of believing the gospel, when an old acquaintance stepped up to me, and whispered in my ear. His voice was very audible, and what he said was so emphatic that for the time being I lost all consciousness of earthly voices, and surroundings. What he said was this: "Stop! do not be in a hurry. Do not decide to-night; you know you have to attend a number of things in Devon. You have to sing at that concert, you know; you have already hired your piano; you have got your new comic songs, and you have been practising them for some time; and, besides, you have sworn to the conductor you would attend and sing. If you become a Christian you could not sing those songs. Then you are engaged for So-and-so's dinner party, and ball. You are engaged seven-deep in the Christmas week. Put it off for a fortnight, and get over the Christmastide. Go down to Devonshire, fulfil all your engagements like a gentleman, and then come back to London, and be a Christian." Then he craftily wound up his exhortation, and capped this diabolical advice with this bit of Scripture, "No man can serve two masters" (Matt. vi. 24).

That last word settled me. I said to my old master, the devil, "You are right, no man can serve two masters; you have been a bad master, and I will serve you no longer; Christ for me henceforth." I got saved there, thank God! on the spot. The very scripture which the devil would have bound me with, and thought to drag me down by, was the very scripture that snapped my chains and set me free. No sooner had I said, "I will serve you no longer," than I again became conscious that my young light-haired friend was still talking to me. "Believe on the Lord

Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," again fell on my ear. The clock was striking ten, and our conversation had been long, and now I asked, "Have I only just to believe that Jesus died for me on the cross, bearing my sins, and if I believe in Him, am I saved?" "That is it," he said. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." I paused a moment. Could I believe in Him, still *feeling* nothing? "Lord, I believe," sprung from my heart, and fell from my lips, and I was saved on the spot. And so may you be on the spot where you now are, if you will believe in Him.

Yes, there and then I got the knowledge that I was forgiven; I met the blessed Saviour, who had overcome death for me. He filled my heart with peace and joy in the same moment, and we have been fast friends for seven-and-thirty years; and I am longing to be eternally with Him. Oh! will you not come with me? Will you not join me? He is a good Master; I can commend Him to you. But you must do as I did; I had to believe before I felt.

I went home that night to my lodgings as happy as a man could be. I was forgiven, saved, emancipated, taken out of darkness into light, brought from distance into nearness. I knew it, and enjoyed it. My soul began to cry out under the sense of the favour of the Lord, and of the love of the Lord; for I had the consciousness that my Saviour had made atonement for my sins, and had washed them all away in His blood.

When I got home, there was Tom, poor fellow, weeping as if his heart would break. "Well, Tom," I asked, "how is it now?" He looked at me, and said, "Man, I see how it is with you by your face." "Yes," I said, "thank God, I am saved, and I know I am

saved." "But how did you get it?" he asked. Oh! what easy work now it was to tell him, and what happy work too. We sat up until three o'clock on Monday morning, reading, praying, and praising, and though Tom did not find Jesus that night, he did next day. I can never forget December 16, 1860.

I had been asked to go to a prayer-meeting, that evening, and went. My dear young fellow-believers, be sure and go to the prayer-meeting; get among Christians. It was a great thing for me that I got among Christians at the start. I remember that night at the prayer-meeting, it had got abroad that I had been saved over-night, and many a Christian came, and gave me a hearty greeting in Christ's name, which much cheered me. When I got home at eleven o'clock, Tom greeted me with a smile, and a warm grip of the hand. It was all right. He had found the Lord, all alone, just before I got in. "Thank God!" I could only say. God saved both of us. Two comrades, now two brothers in the Lord, who had saved us both.

Well, you say, what was the next thing you did? I did not mention my conversion in the office on Monday, as I thought it might be excitement, for I was not a little moved. I would that you could be moved just in the same way, and have the same joy as I had. On Tuesday, my master, a lawyer to whom I was to have had my articles transferred, sent me to Lincoln's Inn, with a message to another lawyer. When I got there, he was not in, and would not be back for an hour, his clerk told me. My business demanded that I should wait, and see his master, so I asked if he would favour me with pen, and paper, and ink, and there in that old musty quarter of

London,—Lincoln's Inn,—I wrote to the conductor of the concert, the man to whom I had sworn faithfully I would come down and sing, and told him of the very remarkable thing that had happened to me. I told him the story as briefly as I could, how God had met me, a hell-going sinner, and saved me, and blessed me; and, I said, that if I went down to sing I must sing about Christ. If I could not sing about Christ, I could not sing at all. My songs had all been changed, and I must be permitted to sing about Christ, if present. I was afraid if I did so I should spoil his concert, so suggested that he had better let me off. I gave him all the gospel I knew, and at the end of the letter I wrote, "Be sure and read this letter to the whole of the Glee Club." Did he do it? Not he. He was one of those professing Christians who sail with the world, and who consequently are a dishonour to the name of Christ, and a stumbling-block in the way of many a young man. He who owns Christ as his Lord must break with the world to be really a witness for Him.

He did not read the letter to my fellow-singers, as I wished, but, as I did not appear at the concert, he told enough of its contents to let the people understand that I had "become religious," and gave them to understand that the reason I was not there was, because I had gone wrong in my head. My dear friends, I wish you had the same disease. I had not gone wrong in my head, but I had got right in my heart, that night. Some people may think me a little mad. I wish you had the same madness. If you think I am making a fool of myself for Christ's sake—godless man—you will find out by-and-by, that you made a great mistake in laughing at me, when I, and all the other people you have laughed at, are with

Christ in glory. Where will you be then? Where will you spend eternity?

Let me assure you of this, that the Christian's life is the happiest, because the holiest. I have been seven-and-thirty years converted, and I find that my portion gets better every year. Christ is dearer, and heaven is nearer, and the gospel is sweeter every year. If you want to have a happy life, you must be on Christ's side. Decide for Him now. Trust the Saviour, and start with Him to-night. But if you start with Him, the next thing will be, you will go out to speak of the Lord. People often say to me, What set you preaching? Well, I never set up to be a preacher; all I can say is, that being filled with the joy of the Lord, I have not been able to contain it; I must tell of it to other people; and that is why I am here to-night; that is the secret. Conversion is just like scarlet fever; it is infectious. If you get converted yourself, you tell others of your new-found joy, and others will get converted also.

You, my dear young man, who have decided for Christ, be firm for Him. I do not say, Follow me, but I say, Follow Christ. Seek to serve the Lord, and put yourself, from this hour, absolutely under Him.

And you, my dear friend, if you have never decided for the Lord before, be decided to-night. If you have not been a Christian before, may the simple tale of my conversion lead you to decision, and set you on your way seeking to serve the Lord. He is coming back, and we shall soon see Him face to face. May we each heed His word, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. ii. 10).

Church Press

There is a Name I love to hear,
I love to speak its worth;
It sounds like music in mine ear,
The sweetest Name on earth.

It tells me of a Saviour's love,
Who died to set me free;
It tells me of His precious blood,
The sinner's perfect plea.

It tells me of a Father's smile
Beaming upon His child;
It cheers me through this "little while,"
Through desert, waste, and wild.

It bids my trembling soul rejoice,
It dries each rising tear;
It tells me, in a "still, small voice,"
To trust and never fear.

Jesus! the Name I love so well,
The Name I love to hear;
No saint on earth its worth can tell,
No heart conceive how dear.

This Name shall shed its fragrance still
Along life's thorny road,
Shall sweetly smooth the rugged hill
That leads me up to God.

And there, with all the blood-bought throng,
From sin and sorrow free,
I'll sing the new, eternal song
Of Jesus' love to me.

F.W.

Behold the Lamb with glory crowned!
To Him all power is given;
No place too high for Him is found,
No place too high in heaven.

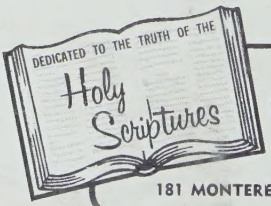
He fills the throne—the throne above,
He fills it without wrong;
The object of His Father's love,
The theme of angels' song.

Though high, yet He accepts the praise
His people offer here;
The faintest, feeblest lay they raise
Will reach the Saviour's ear.

This song be ours, and this alone,
That celebrates the Name
Of Him that sits upon the throne,
And that exalts the Lamb.

To Him whom men despise and slight,
To Him be glory given;
hTe crown is His, and His by right
The highest place in heaven.

Thomas Kelly



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